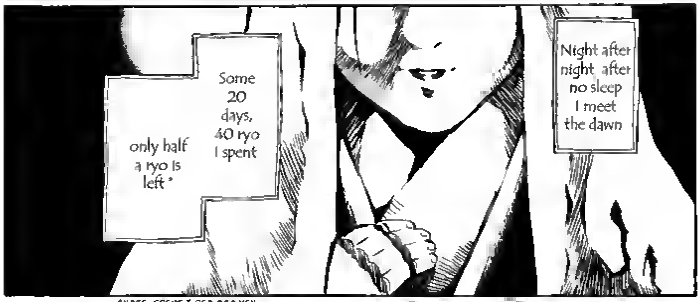
Third Act
Midnight garden, the fish are going round (Part 1)

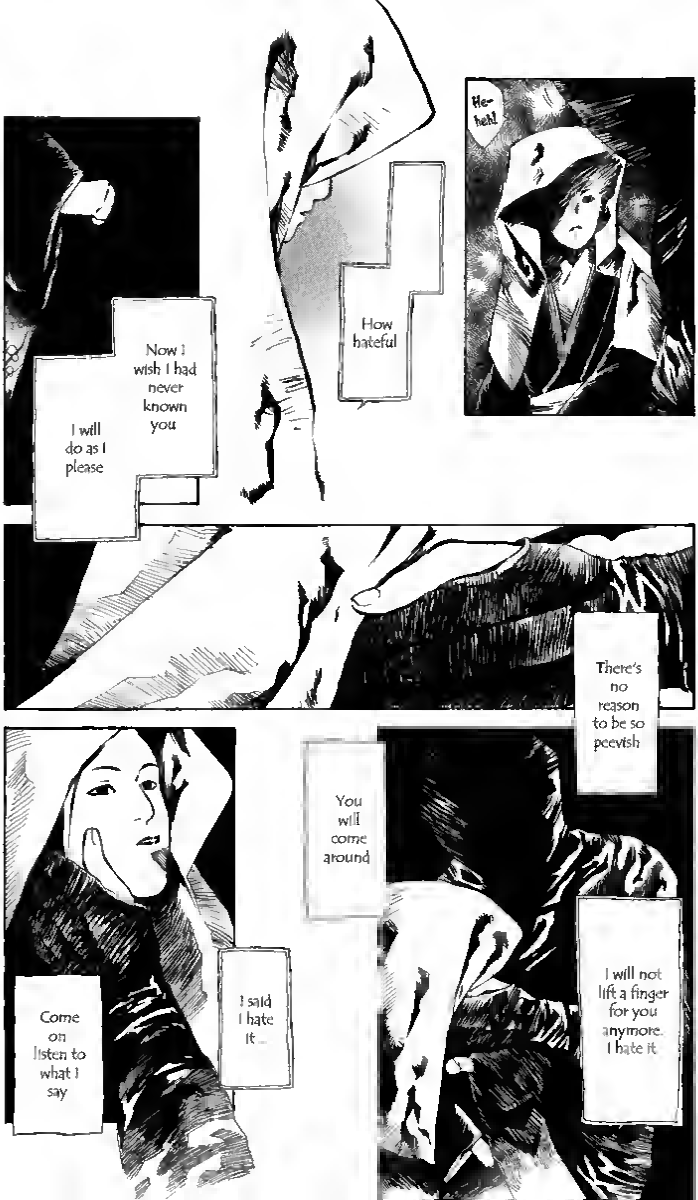
*NOTE. THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM KEISEI KOIHIKYAKU (FIRST STAGE? 1775) A PLAY FOR TRADITIONAL JOURURI DOLL THEATRE. WHICH TELLS THE STORY OF A RICH HEIR ELOPING WITH



*NOTE SPENT 3 950 000 YEN

Are you happy that Chuubei became a criminal for your sake?
Why are you telling with such glee of this soul journey?
Am I?
Ah.
My beloved gentleman stained his hands with sin
You tease me
and destroyed himself for my sake. Of course I would be happy.
It is a happiness unexpected
on our journey together to Hell.

I see
And you?
You mean to take it this far?
My my
That is happiness for me
Even if it has nothing to do with this body of mine even if it's just a play
I am so happy that even my voice shivers
Heh

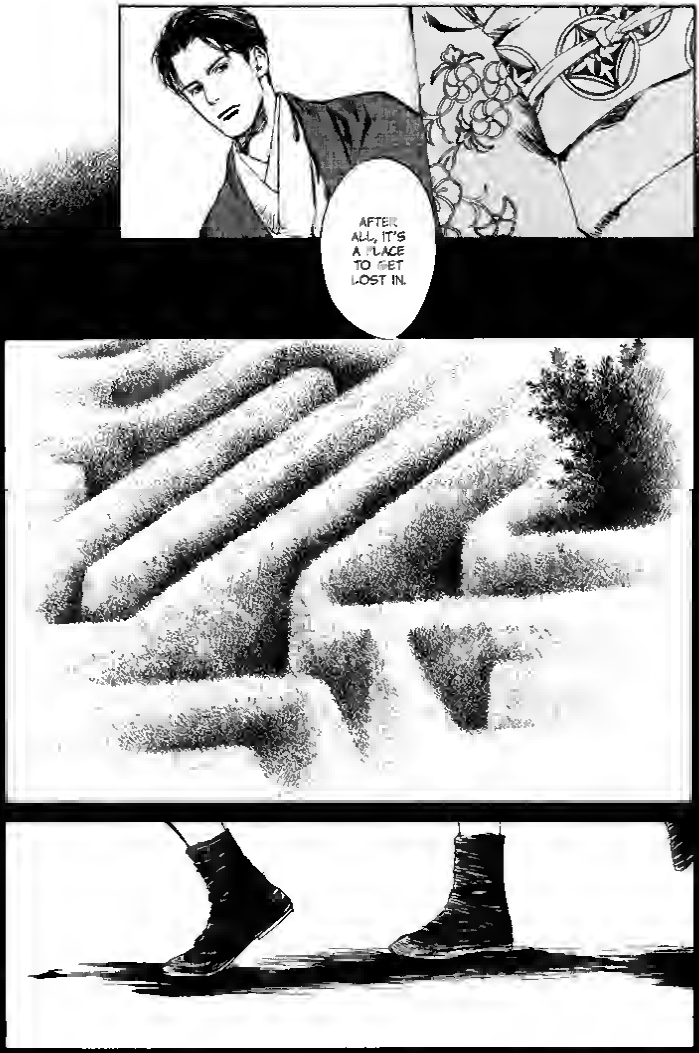

He-heh!
How hateful
Now I wish I had never known you
I will do as I please
There's no reason to be so peevish
You will come around
I will not lift a finger for you anymore. I hate it
I said I hate it...
Come on listen to what I say

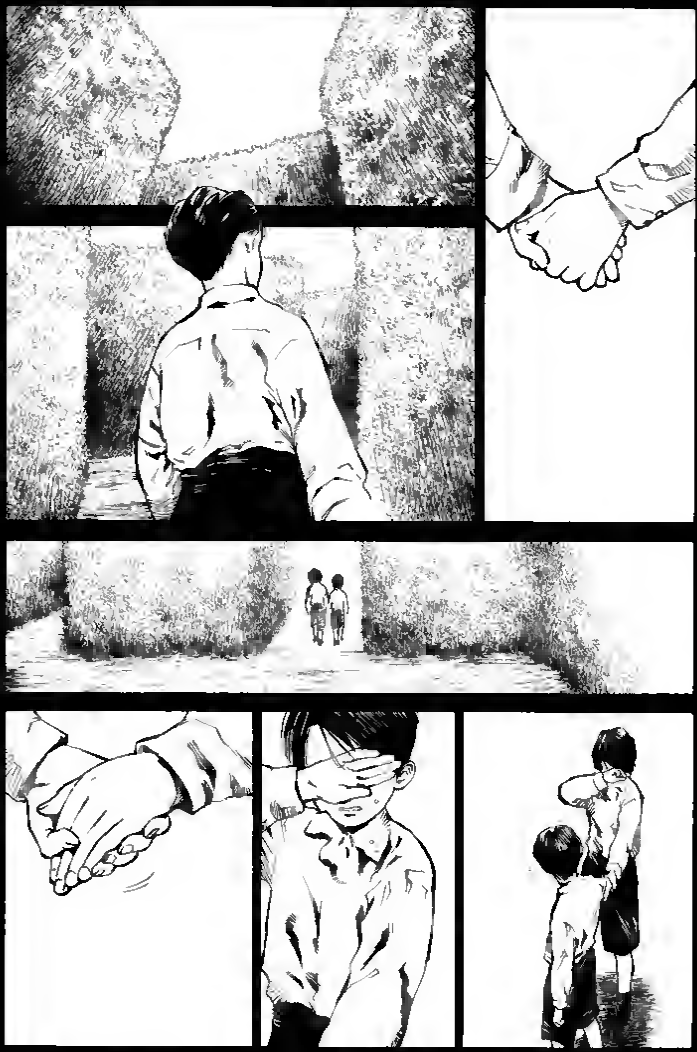
Because we are going to Asakusa tonight, I will not make you do anything bad
Do you love the people of the night so much?
So will you please lend me a hand?
You, at least, I do.
Ah, what skilled flattery...
Listen to me
In Asakusa there is a very tall tower It's known as the Juuntkai
There is a show put up right next to it.

*NOTE: LITERALLY "12 FLOORS." IT WAS TALL 52 METERS AND OCTAGONAL. BUILT 1890. DESTROYED IN THE BIG EARTHQUAKE OF 1923.

Its name is the Chirou Hall
IT'S OVER THERE!
IT'S NAME IS REALLY STRANGE.
I WONDER WHAT IT MEANS?

I HEARD IT'S A CRYSTAL HALL, COPYING A VERY POPULAR EXHIBITION IN CHICAGO, USA.
HE-HEH, I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.


AFTER ALL, IT'S A PLACE TO GET LOST IN.



AHH!
AMAZ-
ING!

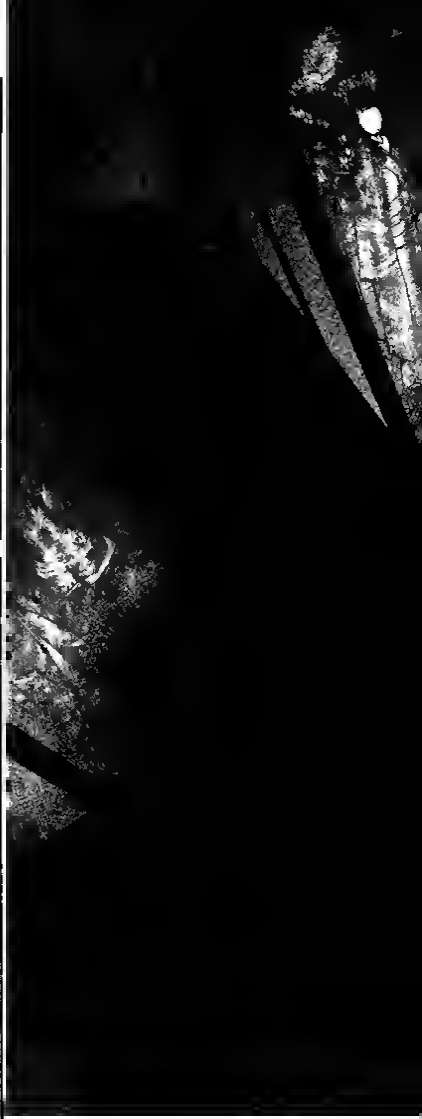
AH.
NO. I'VE BEEN IN THE ONE IN HAMPTON COURT, ENGLAND
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME IN A MAZE, NAOSHI-SAMA?
YOU'VE BEEN ABROAD OFTEN?
AH, AND WE PASSED THE SOUTHERN SEAS ON THE WAY, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH
FATHER, TOKIWA AND ME - WE WENT ON A JOURNEY, JUST THE THREE OF US
IT WAS THE YEAR BEFORE FATHER DIED...
IT WASN'T AS IF WE WERE GOING TO BE TOGETHER WITH FATHER.
HE JUST TOOK US THERE AND THEN LEFT US WITH SOME NANNY
NOT REALLY
THAT IS WONDER-FUL.
YES BECAUSE THAT MAN WANTED TO TAKE US TO SOME FOREIGN COUNTRY

DID YOU FIND THE EXIT OF THE MAZE RIGHT AWAY?
WE WERE WITH A NANNY AT HAMPTON COURT, TOO
AND NOT JUST IN THE MAZE, IT WAS THE SAME IN THE CITIES,
NO MATTER WHERE WE WENT, I KEPT GOING IN THE BY-ALLEYS AND GETTING LOST
AND I WAS SO OBSTI-NATE THAT I DIDN'T EVEN ASK PEOPLE FOR HELP
NO,
WE GOT LOST.
I WAS VERY GOOD AT GETTING LOST.
SO YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH TOKIWA-SAN.
WHEN WE WERE BRATS, YES.
USUALLY, TOKIWA JUST STARTED CRYING AND THAT SAVED US.
I WAS JUST REMI-NISCING ABOUT THAT.

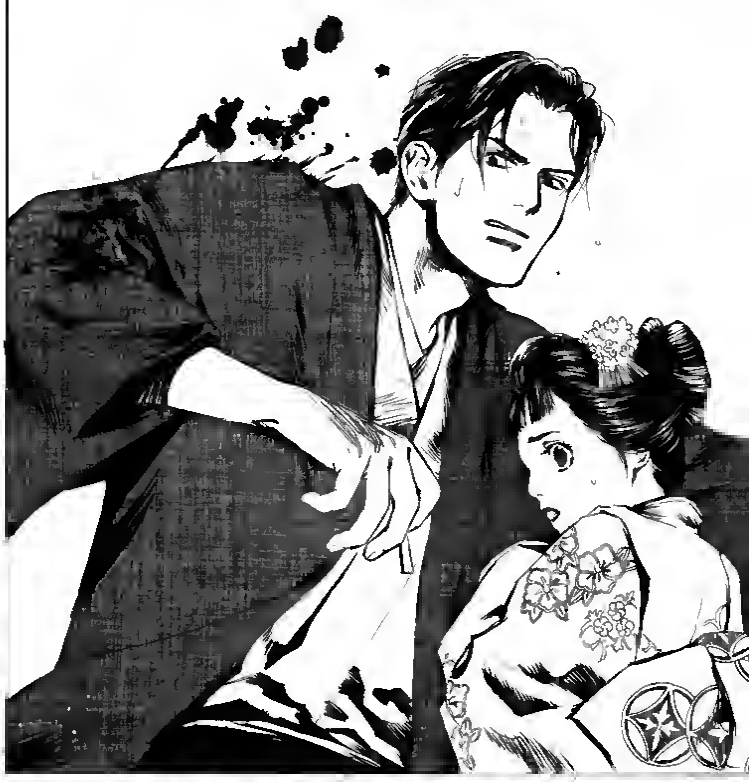
HE CAME TO SEE ME FOR A WHILE AFTER I MOVED TO USHIGOME
BUT HATSUKO AND MOM AND EVERYONE GOT MAD, SO HE STOPPED.
SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS..
IT'S NOT THAT I HATE HIM FOR SOME REASON.
I JUST LOST THE WILL TO GO AND MEET HIM AND TRY TO BE FRIENDLY.
I LOST INTEREST.. YES, I SUPPOSE THAT'S HOW THINGS WITH CHILDHOOD FRIENDS GO..
IS THAT SO..
Creak
?
Creak
NAOSHI-SAMA..

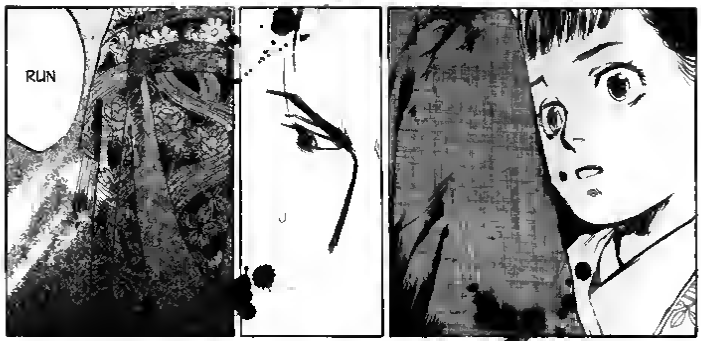
THAT IS...

STEP BACK.

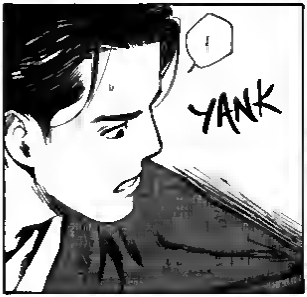


MARINO..
SCREAM
MARINO.
TURN
NO..
MARI—
RUN




RUN

GO!


YANK

DON'T!
LITTLE GIRL, DO YOU WANT TO DIE?

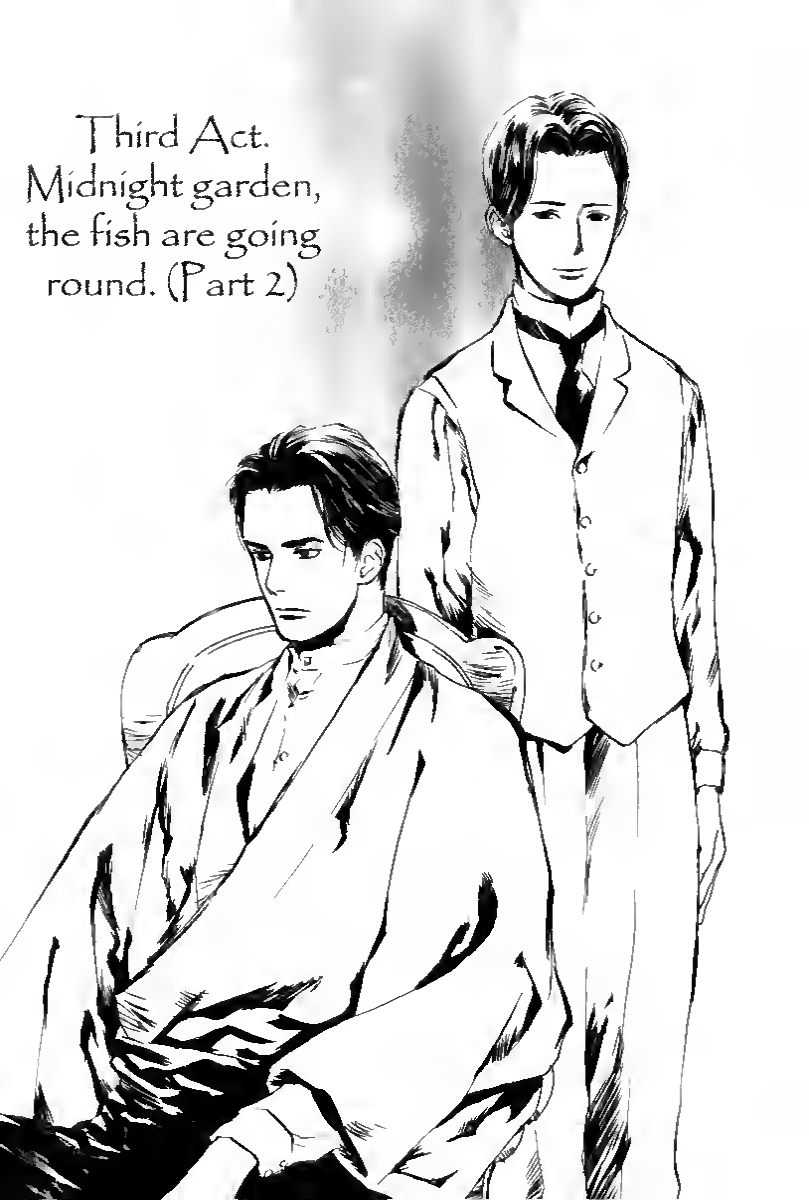
GRAB
DON'T STAND IN MY WAY
NO!
I WON'T LET YOU!

NAOSHI-SAMA
NAOSHI-SAMA,
TAKE HER CLAWS...!
SHOVE
AH!

MARINO!

CEASE THIS.

Third Act. Midnight garden, the fish are going round. (Part 2)

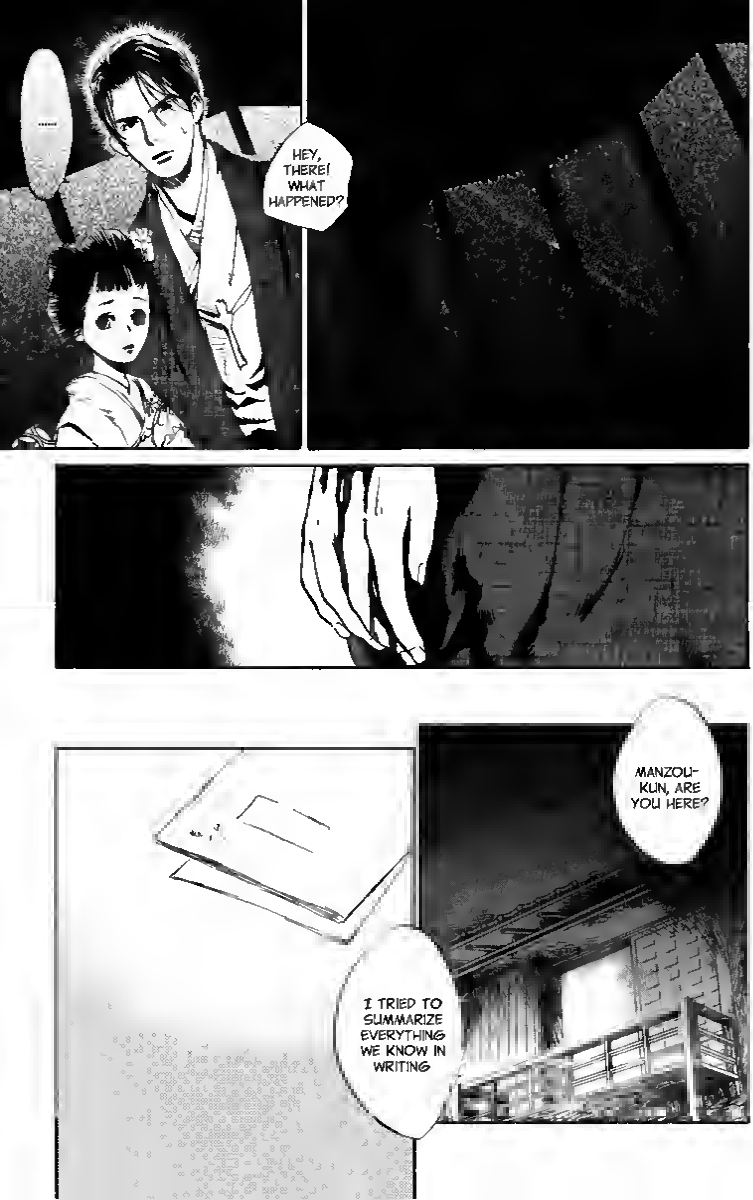


I SHALL
TAKE THIS.

IN ORDER TO AVOID AN UNSIGHTLY END OF THE ACT, PLEASE, LEAVE THIS PLACE IMMEDIATELY.
WITH THIS, THE FIRST ACT ENDS.
PEOPLE ARE COMING, YOU KNOW
Where did they come from?
I heard voices.
This way

DRAG

WHO ARE YOU..?


.....
HEY, THERE! WHAT HAPPENED?
MANZOU-KUN, ARE YOU HERE?
I TRIED TO SUMMARIZE EVERYTHING WE KNOW IN WRITING

AS FOR O-CHIYO-SAN, SHE WAS GIVEN THE SMALL VILLA SHE WAS INHABITING WHEN THE PRINCIPAL HOUSE WAS MOVED HERE, TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL.
YEAH, O-SAWA-SAN DIED ABOUT SIX YEARS AFTER TOKIWA-SAN WAS TAKEN AWAY.
LOOKS LIKE THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN O-SAWA-SAN AND O-CHIYO-SAN.
ON TOP OF THAT, O-SAWA-SAN REMAINED IN HER PARENTS' HOME ALL ALONG
YES, THE CHOUSHUU FEUDAL LORDS ON ONE SIDE AND YOKOHAMA MERCHANTS ON THE OTHER.
COME TO THINK OF IT, NAOSHI-SAN SAID SOMETHING TO THAT EFFECT, TOO
WELL...
I GUESS THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE CALL HAVING SERIOUS POLITICAL CONNECTIONS
THAT'S TRUE
HE WAS REALLY THE PERFECT OPPOSITE OF TOKIWA-SAN.
NAOSHI-SAN, EH?

AFTER THAT, HE RECEIVED AN APPEAL FROM THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT TO AT LEAST GO JOIN THE ARMY INSTEAD.
BUT HE IGNORED IT
KIKUE-SAN SAID NAOSHI-SAN DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL
LOOKS LIKE HE WAS EXPELLED FOR CONTINUED UNATTENDANCE.
IT SEEMS THAT NAOSHI-SAN HAS ACQUAINTANCES AMONG THE SUPPORTERS OF DEMO-CRACY
AND THERE'S SOMETHING I HEARD FROM A FELLOW REPORTER
THEY BOTH SAY THEY DON'T NEED THE INHERI-TANCE...
WELL, EVEN IF THEY HAVE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PRESENCE AND PERSONALITY, THEY HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON.
WOW...

THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I THINK THINGS WON'T END SO SIMPLY
BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM SEEM INCONVENIENCED
..THAT THEY SAY SUCH A THING
I SWEAR..
WHAT IS IT?
MANZOU-SAN!
MANZOU-SAN!

A YOUNG MAN HAS BEEN ATTACKED AND WOUNDED AT THE CHIROU HALL
WOUNDED?
YOU MEAN HE—
YAMIGOZEN APPEARED!
YES
SHE FAILED TO KILL HIM.
HE WAS TAKEN TO SECOND MEDICAL ACADEMY.
DO YOU KNOW HIS NAME?
YES
SOMETHING LIKE TAKATSUKASA NAOSHI..
EH?!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT
WHERE DO YOU EVEN GET YOUR INFORMATION?
THIS IS ASAKUSA, SO.
MANZOU-KUN KNOWS MANY PEOPLE THERE, SO WE WERE INFORMED IMMEDIATELY.
I DO VARIOUS SHOWS AND ENTERTAIN-MENTS AND THE ASAKUSA NEIGHBORHOOD IS MY TURF

AH..
NAOSHI!
KNOCK KNOCK
I SEE.
HIRAKAWA-SAN...
AND MANZOU-SAN, TOO..
SO HOW IS YOUR WOUND?
WHAT?
THEY CONTACTED YOU TOO?
SHOULD YOU BE AWAKE?
YES
THE HEAD OF THIS HOSPITAL IS MY CLOSE FRIEND..

IT'S NO BIG DEAL IT'S ONLY TWO GRAZES
THE DOCTOR ADVISED ME TO STAY HERE TONIGHT, BUT...
IF I INSISTED THAT I WANTED TO GO, THEY WOULD HAVE LET ME
I'M GLAD
YES
NO
PLEASE, DON'T WORRY
ARE YOU HURT...?
MARINO-SAN, WERE YOU BY ANY CHANCE WITH HIM?

I HEARD IT WAS YAMIGOZEN...
EHM...
AH, NO, IT'S NOT AS IF THAT'S ALL I CARE ABOUT..
EH?!
THAT'S WHAT YOU CAME HERE FOR, RIGHT?
YES
SO, THAT'S THE FOX-WOMAN EVERYONE HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT
IT'S NOT ALL I'M HERE FOR, BUT FOR THE TIME BEING, PLEASE..
I DON'T MIND
THEN COULD I TROUBLE YOU ABOUT THE PARTICULARS..?
THE ONE I MET IN THE CHIROU HALL WAS AN AKAHIME*, JUST AS I HAD HEARD HER DESCRIBED

*NOTE: IN TRADITIONAL KABUKI THEATER, THE PART OF A YOUNG, NAIVE AND VERY MUCH IN LOVE YOUNG LADY USUALLY DRESSED IN BRIGHT RED

SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS...
SO AFTER ALL, YAMIGOZEN IS A HUMAN BEING...
I THINK SO
AT LEAST THE CLAWS SEEMED TO BE FROM STEEL OR SOMETHING ELSE WROUGHT
AH, YOU REALLY WERE VERY LUCKY TO ESCAPE
I HAD A VAGUE IMPRESSION THAT SHE WAS A BEAUTY WITH A SLENDER FACE, BUT THAT'S ALL...
IS THAT SO...?
DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING ABOUT HER FACE?
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
SHE HAD FULL WHITE MAKEUP ON AND IT WAS DARK INSIDE.

WHO KNOWS?
I WONDER IF HE WAS ON OUR SIDE OR ON YAMIGOZEN'S...
I GUESS NOT.
AND WHO IN THE WORLD WAS THAT KUROKO*?
NOT POSSIBLE.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MARINO-SAN?
YES, GOOD QUES-TION.
AND THEN CAME RUN-NING THE BARKERS OF THE CHIROU HALL.
LOOKS LIKE THE KUROKO TOLD THEM HE SAW A WOMAN DRESSED AS AKAHIME ENTER THROUGH THE BACK OF THE ATTRACTION HALL.
*NOTE: PUPPETEERS IN TRADITIONAL JAPANESE THEATER. THEY APPEAR ON STAGE, HOLDING THE DOLL, DRESSED IN BLACK FROM HEAD TO TOE, INCLUDING THE FACE.
THAT'S WHY THEY WENT INSIDE, TO CHECK WHAT WAS HAPPENING
I COULD HEAR THEIR VOICES, SO THAT BUILDING MUST BE A LOT SMALLER THAN I THOUGHT IT WAS
THAT'S CORRECT
DUE TO THE MIRRORS, IT SEEMS AS IF IT CONTINUES ON FOREVER, BUT IT'S NOT SUCH A BIG BUILDING AS IT SEEMS

THAT'S WHY IT'S BUILT SO THAT SEVERAL PLACES IN IT CAN OPEN.
THERE IS A PASSAGE, SURROUNDING THE MAZE IN CASES OF FIRE EMERGENCIES, IT ALSO DOUBLES AS AN ESCAPE ROUTE.
THEY ARE LESS THAN A METER WIDE, BUT THAT'S ENOUGH FOR SUCH SIDEDOORS
SO YAMIGOZEN USED ONE OF THOSE...
THE WALLS CAN OPEN?
YES
OPENINGS ARE CLEVERLY BUILT IN.
ANYONE WHO HAD SEEN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING THE PLACE COULD HAVE MADE A CONJECTURE.
THAT IS NOT ENTIRELY TRUE
IN OTHER WORDS, SHE SHOULD BE SOMEONE WELL FAMILIAR WITH THE CHIROU HALL
YOU NEED TO KNOW YOUR WAY VERY, VERY THOROUGHLY OR YOU'LL GET LOST AND EVERYTHING WILL FAIL
BUT IN ORDER TO SNEAK IN THE MAZE AND THEN RUN AWAY FROM IT WHILE PEOPLE CHASE YOU,

IS THAT DIFFICULT?
NO.
ACTUALLY, THERE ARE MANY LOOP-HOLES IN THE MAZE
IF ANYONE GOT INJURED OR UNWELL INSIDE, THE STAFF NEED TO BE ABLE TO COME AND GO FREELY.
ANYONE CAN FIGURE IT OUT,
IF THEY SAW THE STAFF DO IT OR WENT AND CHECKED FOR THEM-SELVES BY CHANCE.
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IT RAISE UP THE GLASS AND PASS THROUGH.
MOREOVER, WITH THE ASSAULT ON NAOSHI-SAN, IT'S NOW UNTHINKABLE THAT ALL THIS SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE UPROAR AT THE TAKATSUKASA FAMI—
IF YAMIGOZEN IS HUMAN, THEN THERE DEFI-NITELY IS A CRIMINAL ON THE LOSE
THE SETTING OF THE CHIROU HALL IS ESPECIALLY COMPLICATED,
BUT IF ONE HAS BEEN TO SOME CHEAPER MAZE, IT'S NOT DIFFI-CULT TO GET A GOOD IDEA ABOUT THE PLACE

!
AH...
I-I'M... THAT WAS VERY RUDE OF ME
IT'S A LITTLE LATE FOR THAT
ONCE WE'RE ON THE TOPIC OF RUDE, MAY I ASK SOMETHING?
MARINO-SAN,
COULD YOU PERHAPS UNDERSTAND IF YAMIGOZEN WAS A MAN OR A WOMAN?
MAN?!
YES

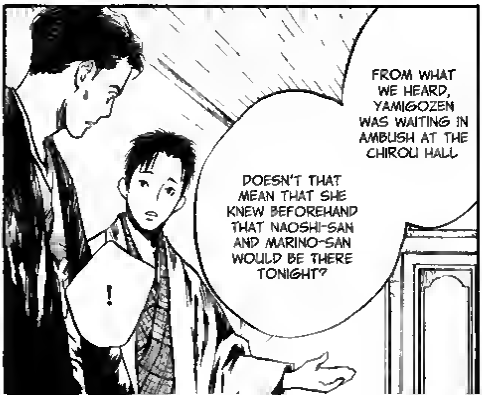
THEN IT'S NOT NECESSARY THAT THE AKAHIME YAMIGOZEN SHOULD BE A WOMAN..
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT AND AKAHIME IS A ROLE IN KABUKI THEATER
NORMALLY, IT'S PLAYED BY MEN*
MARINO-SAN,
WHAT DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU CLUNG TO YAMIGOZEN?
IT DEFINITELY DIDN'T FEEL AS IF SHE WERE NOT A WOMAN, BUT...
I'M NOT SURE.

*NOTE. ONLY MEN ARE ALLOWED TO ACT IN KABUKI INCLUDING THE FEMALE ROLES

IT'S TRUE THAT I FELT SHE WAS BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN ME
BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M OF AN ESPECIALLY SMALL FRAME
EVEN..

MARINO!

KIKUE-SAN..
...IS A WOMAN MUCH BIGGER THAN MYSELF


FROM WHAT WE HEARD, YAMIGOZEN WAS WAITING IN AMBUSH AT THE CHIROU HALL
DOESN'T THAT MEAN THAT SHE KNEW BEFOREHAND THAT NAOSHI-SAN AND MARINO-SAN WOULD BE THERE TONIGHT?
!

THERE'S NO NEED TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS AND SULLY PEOPLE'S CHARACTERS LIKE THAT

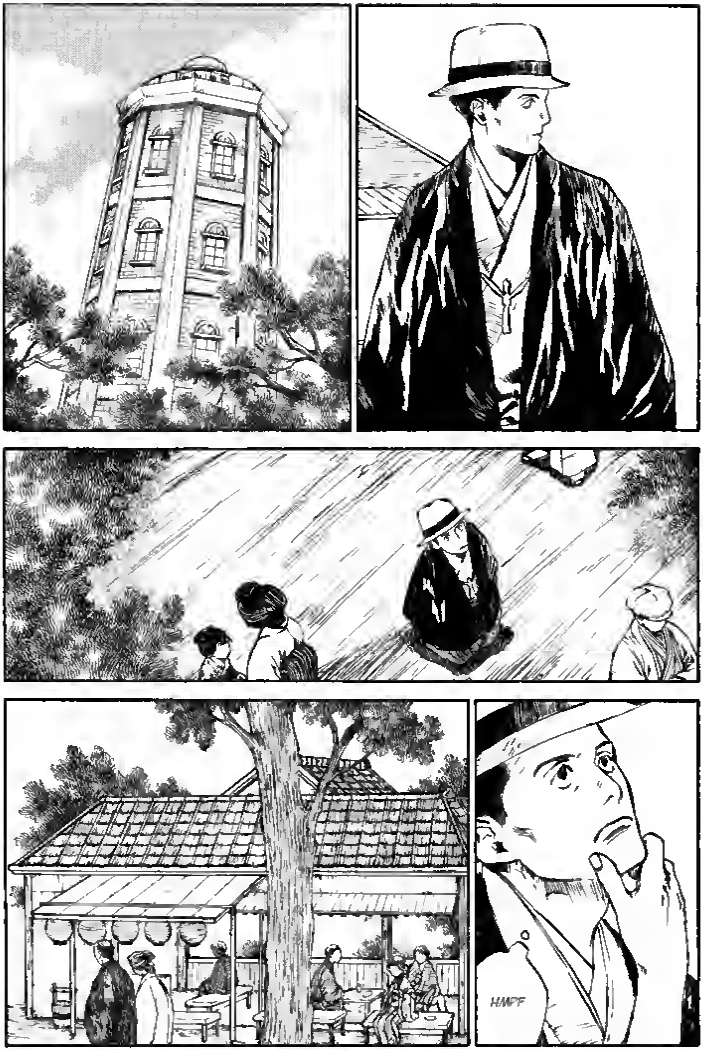
NAOSHI-SAN, DID YOU TELL ANYONE THAT YOU'RE GOING OUT TONIGHT?
I KNEW ABOUT IT
ACTUALLY, THIS EVENING OUR RELATIVES HAD COME AGAIN
THIS CONVER-SATION IS GOING NOWHERE
LET US CONTINUE THIS TOMORROW EVENING..

I CAN'T. I'VE PROMISED TO GO TO ASAKUSA TOMORROW
MY COMPANION SAYS SHE WANTS TO SEE THE CHIROU HALL AT ANY RATE.
I SAID THAT
REALLY
EXCEPT THE RELATIVES, THERE WERE SEVERAL SERVANTS PRESENT.
SAKICHI, YOU WERE THERE, RIGHT?
WHO ELSE HEARD...?
I WAS
BUT LAST NIGHT, KIKUE-SAN WAS PRESENT, TOO
SAKICHI!

SO YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HER AT ALL TONIGHT?
YES...
WHERE IS KIKUE-SAN TONIGHT?
THE IDEA OF MEETING TONIGHT WAS EVENTUALLY ABANDONED, SO I DIDN'T MAKE ANY PLANS TO MEET HER..
ANYONE ELSE WHO KNEW?
THERE SHOULDN'T BE
OF COURSE, I TOLD THE PEOPLE AT HOME WHERE I'M GOING WHEN I LEFT
BUT I CAN'T GUARANTEE THAT THE PEOPLE FROM TOKIWA'S OR MY HOUSEHOLD HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE.

IS THAT SO...
...COULD BE ANYONE EXCEPT NAOSHI AND MARINO
IN OTHER WORDS, YAMIGOZEN...
SOMEONE IS WANDERING THROUGH THE NIGHT, LIKE A BLOOD-THIRSTY DEMON...

Third Act.
Midnight garden, the fish are going round. (Part 3.)

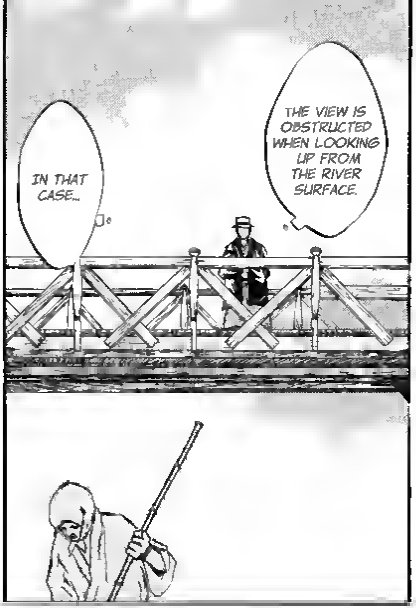

HMPF

MAY I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED HERE SOME TIME AGO. DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
YES IT WAS A BIG COMMOTION
IT SEEMS THAT THE FLAMING DEMON WAS ON THE VIEWING PLATFORM OF THE ATAGO TOWER.
YES, YES A MAN WAS PUSHED FROM THERE.
I DIDN'T SEE IT, BUT THEY SAID HE HAD PALM PRINTS ON HIS BACK...
...AND HORRIBLE BURNS.
WERE YOU HERE THAT DAY?
I HAVE A TRADE.

WITH A WOODEN BOX THIS BIG ON HIS BACK AND A DEEP BRAIDED HAT..
THEN DIDN'T YOU SEE A NEWS SELLER THAT DAY?
THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE HERE EVEN AT NIGHT,
I SEE..
SO I, AT LEAST, DIDN'T NOTICE HIM..
NEWS SELLER, YOU SAY..?
NO...
TOUGH LUCK

THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARS AT NIGHT, RIGHT?
NEWS SELLER?
NO, I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T WORK AT NIGHT.
I SEE...
BOATS ARE PASSING, THOUGH...
THE THIRD VICTIM WAS PUSHED FROM HERE...
THERE AREN'T ANY PEOPLE USING THE ROADS IN THE VICINITY.

IF YOU MELTED IN THE DARKNESS, NOBODY WOULD KNOW YOU'RE THERE


IN THAT CASE...
THE VIEW IS OBSTRUCTED WHEN LOOKING UP FROM THE RIVER SURFACE.

I DON'T THINK IT'S A COINCIDENCE, BUT..
THE FLAMING DEMON AND THE NEWS SELLER...

THAT'S TRUE

AND WHAT ABOUT YAMI-GOZEN?
YOU'RE RIGHT.
RIGHT.
IF IT HAPPENED ONLY ONCE, IT COULD BE CONSIDERED A COINCIDENCE, BUT..
YES
AND THAT'S WHY I THOUGHT THAT IF HE HAD BEEN CLOSE TO THE CRIME SCENE, MANY PEOPLE WOULD HAVE SEEN THE STAND
THE SOBA SELLER WITH THE HANNYA HAS A STAND,
SHE SENT A BOY AND A YOUNG MAN RUNNING
YES, THERE ARE MORE SIGHTINGS OF HER.
THERE ARE ONLY THREE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SEEN HIM OPERATING THE SOBA STAND
BUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE SEEN THE MAN WITH THE HANNYA MASK ON ARE FEW
IN FIVE CASES THERE ARE WITNESSES WHO SAW THE SOBA STAND
OUT OF THEM,
THERE ARE SEVEN CASES IN-VOLVING YAMIGOZEN.

I WONDER WHERE THE OWNER WAS IN ALL THOSE CASES?
THE REST SAW JUST AN EMPTY STAND, WITH THE FIRE DIED DOWN AND NOBODY BEHIND IT.
OR YAMIGOZEN IN PERSON.
YAMIGOZEN'S ACCOMPLICE.
AND THE JOURNALIST WHO PUBLISHED THE ARTICLE ABOUT IT.
ALSO, I WENT TO SEE THE POLICEMAN WHO CAME TO THE SCENE WHEN TOKIWA-SAN WAS ATTACKED.
IF IT'S YAMIGOZEN IN PERSON, THEN IT'S AS YOU SAY AND IT'S A MAN.

AH, YES, BY THE WAY, ABOUT THE FACT THAT TOKIWA-SAN'S NAME DIDN'T APPEAR IN THE NEWSPAPERS...
HE MUST HAVE HUSHED IT UP, OF COURSE?
ALTHOUGH, WELL... I COULDN'T LEARN ANY-THING NEW.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THAT DAY TOKIWA-SAN WAS WEARING A VERY PLAIN AND INCONSPICUOUS KIMONO.
NO, NO, COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE TOKIWA-SAN GAVE HIS NAME, TAKATSUKASA.
BUT EVERYONE THOUGHT THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD BE FROM THAT LINE OF IMPERIAL REGENTS AND ADVISERS.
AH, IT MUST HAVE BEEN BECAUSE HE WAS VISITING KIKUE-SAN'S HOME IN SECRET.
WESTERN-STYLE CLOTHING ATTRACTS ATTENTION, SO HE PROB-ABLY MEANT THAT AS A DISGUISE.

I UNDERSTAND SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS
IT SEEMS THAT WAS THE REASON WHY THE DETAILS WEREN'T PUBLISHED
AND IF ANYONE WANTED TO GO CHECK, THE TAKATSUKASA HAVE A PRETTY HIGH THRESHOLD FOR VISITORS
I SEE. SO THAT'S WHY NOBODY BELIEVED THAT WHAT HE SAID WAS TRUE.
THE JOURNALIST IN QUESTION ALSO SCOLDED ME SAID THAT I HAD TO LEARN THE MEANING OF THE WORD "TIMID"...
YOU'RE BULLYING ME.
BRAVO, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
AND YOU WENT TO THE PERSON HIMSELF TO ASCERTAIN THAT?
HE COULD HAVE USED A RICKSHAW OR A CARRIAGE AND THAT'S ALL
IF HE JUST WANTED TO AVOID PEOPLE'S ATTENTION, HE DIDN'T HAVE TO WALK THE STREETS AT NIGHT IN DISGUISE
BUT EVEN SO, TOKIWA-SAN WENT TO A GREAT INCONVENIENCE

IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT FAMILY UPHEAVAL, IT'D BE NO WONDER IF HIS PEOPLE STOPPED HIM.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT
THE FACT THAT HE WENT ALONE LIKE THAT MEANS THAT HE WANTED TO AVOID THE ATTENTION OF THE PEOPLE IN HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD, TOO.
EH?
I WONDER HOW KIKUE-SAN FEELS ABOUT IT.
MAYBE HE HAS HIS OF SENSE OF LOYALTY, BUT FOR HIM, ALL THIS MUST BE A PRETTY DREARY STORY.
EVEN IF SHE CANNOT BECOME A LEGAL WIFE, FOR A WOMAN OF HER BACK-GROUND,
BECOMING TAKATSUKASA'S OFFICIAL CONCUBINE IS AN ENORMOUS LEAP IN HER CAREER.

I THINK SHE MUST FEEL QUITE BITTER ABOUT IT
AND NOW IT'S AS IF SHE ONLY HAS SOME YOUNG MAN WHO NOBODY KNOWS COMING TO HER.
IF THE PROPER HEIR OF THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY KEEPS COMING TO VISIT HER, SHE WILL SAVE FACE BEFORE THE NEIGHBORHOOD
THERE ARE SUCH THINGS AS APPEARANCES AND PRIDE.
I WONDER ABOUT THAT. HOWEVER...
ALTHOUGH I THINK IT'S JUST SPECULATIONS...
I SEE YOUR POINT...
YES.
O-CHIYO-SAN.
IT MUST BE THE SAME FOR O-CHIYO-SAN, TOO.

YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF CHARACTER NAOSHI-SAN HAS
AND IT DIDN'T SEEM AS IF HE WAS ASHAMED HIS FAMILY WOULDN'T CALL HIM TAKAT-SUKASA.
BUT DOES HIS MOTHER FEEL THE SAME WAY?
AFTER ALL, SHE SHOULD HAVE BECOME THE LADY OF THE HOUSE AT THE AZABU MANSION, THE PROPER WIFE.
...

BOTH NAOSHI-SAN AND TOKIWA-SAN SAID THEY'RE NOT INTERESTED IN INHERITING THE FAMILY.
BUT THE PEOPLE IN THEIR SURROUNDINGS SEEM MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.
THAT'S TRUE...
BUT, OH, WELL, NO MATTER IF THOSE TWO HAVE EXPECTATIONS OR NOT,
WE CAN SAY THAT ALL THIS IS RELATED TO THE UPROAR IN THEIR FAMILY.

THEN WHO COULD BE THE CRIMINAL?
YES
I THINK SO, TOO
THE FIRST ONE ATTACKED WAS TOKIWA-SAN.
TAKING ONLY THIS INTO ACCOUNT IT SEEMS THAT THE CULPRIT IN FROM NAOSHI-SAN'S
BUT, AS MARINO-SAN SAID...

IT MIGHT BE ALL JUST TOKIWA SAN'S ACT
YES
OR ELSE SOMEONE FROM TOKIWA-SAN'S SIDE ATTACKED HIM ONLY TO DISPERSE SUSPICION
ALTHOUGH IN THIS SCENARIO, IT WORRIES ME HOW ACCIDENTALLY HE WAS ATTACKED
HM... THAT'S TRUE
ON THE OTHER HAND, NAOSHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN JUST LIKE TOKIWA-SAN WAS
JUDGING ONLY FROM THAT, IT SEEMS THAT THE CULPRIT MUSTBE ON TOKIWA-SAN'S SIDE,
BUT IT COULD BE AN ACT NAOSHI-SAN PAID SOMEONE TO PUT UP, OR IT COULD BE SOMETHING SOMEONE FROM HIS SIDE DID
HOW-EVER...

ABOUT THAT..
SHOULDN'T WE DISMISS WHAT MARINO-SAN SAID ABOUT TOKIWA-SAN TRYING TO BRING DOWN NAOSHI-SAN?
MAYBE SOMEONE ON NAOSHI-SAN'S SIDE PANICKED..
..THAT TOKIWA-SAN MAY BE TRYING TO BRING HIS BROTHER DOWN AND SO STAGED THIS TO DEEPEN THE SUSPICIONS ON TOKIWA-SAN.
BUT HOWEVER THAT MAY BE,
IT'S STILL IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH A CONCLUSION FOR NOW
I'M GETTING DIZZY..
YES, ME TOO

THE PROBLEM IS NOT SO MUCH WHO THE CULPRIT IS,
BUT RATHER WHO THE CULPRIT IS REALLY AFTER?
.....
MANZOU-KUN.
THAT'S RIGHT...
YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON...
ARE THOSE TWO PEOPLE CONNECTED?

TWO SUPERNATURAL BEINGS APPEARING AT THE SAME TIME AND CAUSING SUCH INCIDENTS...

AT FIRST GLANCE, THEY APPEAR TO BE DIFFERENT BUT.. I THINK THE WAY THEY STAGE THEIR PERFORMANCES IS SIMILAR
I'M LISTENING..
THEY ARE EXTRAORDINARY, INCLUDING FIRE AND CLAWS
ONE HAS THE NEWS SELLER, ONE HAS THE HANNYA SOBA STAND APPEARING IN THE CLOSE VICINITY
RATHER THAN THE DOING OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE, I THINK..
珍妙珍奇噺替

I REALIZED IT TODAY, WHEN I WENT TO THE ACTUAL SCENE
FURTHERMORE, THEIR TURFS ARE VERY NEATLY DIVIDED
THEIR TURFS...?
LOOKS LIKE THE FLAMING DEMON LIKES HIGH PLACES
COME TO THINK OF IT...
TATSUMIDOU, ATAGO TOWER, KITAMONBASHI AND IZAWA-YA, RIGHT?
HE CHOOSES HIGH AND DESERTED PLACES FOR HIS PERFORMANCES, BUT WITH MANY PEOPLE COMING AND GOING BELOW THEM.

ON THE OTHER HAND, YAMIGOZEN ALWAYS CHOOSES PLACES WHICH ARE SECLUDED BUT WITH NO SHORTAGE OF POSSIBLE VICTIMS
THAT'S IT EXACTLY!
I THINK IT'S NOT SO MUCH A MATTER OF YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON HAVING DIFFERENT TASTES...
...AS OF ONE PERSON CHOOSING DIFFERENT DISGUISES ACCORDING TO THE PLACE.
IT CERTAINLY SEEMS THIS WAY
THAT MAY BE THE REASON FOR THE DIFFERENT NUMBER OF PEOPLE THEY'VE KILLED, EVEN THOUGH THEY STARTED APPEARING AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME.
BECAUSE THE FLAMING DEMON HAS TO CHOOSE HIS STAGE CAREFULLY...

YES,
THAT'S WHY I THINK THAT AT LEAST THOSE TWO CHARACTERS ARE THE SAME PERSON.
OH?
I WONDER ABOUT THAT
IT'S EVEN POSSIBLE THAT THE SWORDSMAN IS ALSO THE SAME PERSON.
YES.
BUT RATHER THAN THINKING THAT TWO MURDERERS STARTED ACTING AT THE SAME TIME,
IT'S BETTER TO ASSUME THAT ONE PERSON IS USING MANY DISGUISES

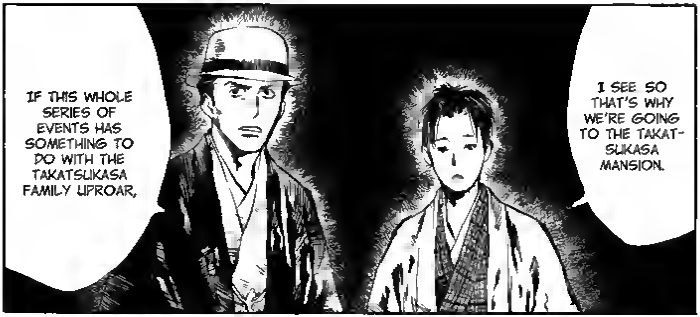
.....
MAYBE I WAS...

IS IT SOMEONE'S TRICK?
OR IS IT REALLY MONSTERS?

MAYBE DEEP INSIDE, I WAS HAVING FUN WITH THE IDEA THAT SOMETHING SO STRANGE IS RAMPANT HERE,
IN THE CAPITAL.

BUT,
IT'S A HUMAN

I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEIR GOAL IS, BUT..
IT'S NOT RIGHT TO LET SUCH A DANGEROUS PERSON ROAM FREELY EVERY NIGHT.
AH-D...
NOT JUST WATCH WHAT'S HAPPENING FROM THE SIDE, AS A JOURNALIST.
I'VE DECIDED TO SERIOUSLY TRY PLAYING THE DETECTIVE IN ALL THIS
THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR HELP
WILL YOU LEND ME A HAND?
OF COURSE.


IF THIS WHOLE SERIES OF EVENTS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY UPROAR,
I SEE SO THAT'S WHY WE'RE GOING TO THE TAKATSUKASA MANSION.

THEN ALL THE INFORMATION WE NEED IS HERE.

Third Act. Midnight garden, the fish are going round. (Part 4)

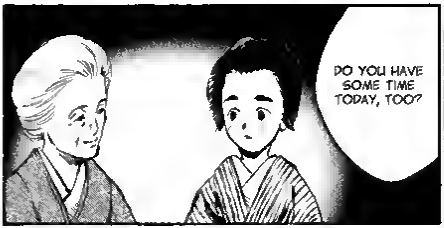
I THINK TOKIWA-SAMA WILL BE HOME ANY MINUTE NOW
NO, NO, DON'T WORRY
WE WERE WONDERING HOW YOUR RECOVERY IS GOING?
IT'S NOT AS IF WE HAD ANY PARTICULAR BUSINESS WITH TOKIWA-SAN.
WE WERE REALLY JUST PASSING CLOSE BY.

YES
IT WAS ALL JUST ACHING LIMBS TO START WITH.
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TROUBLE.
YOU LOOK MUCH BETTER NOW
I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN WORRIED, TOO, MISS?

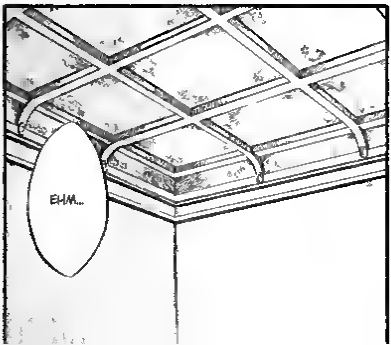
WE MET THE LAST TIME WE VISITED TOKIWA-SAN, RIGHT?

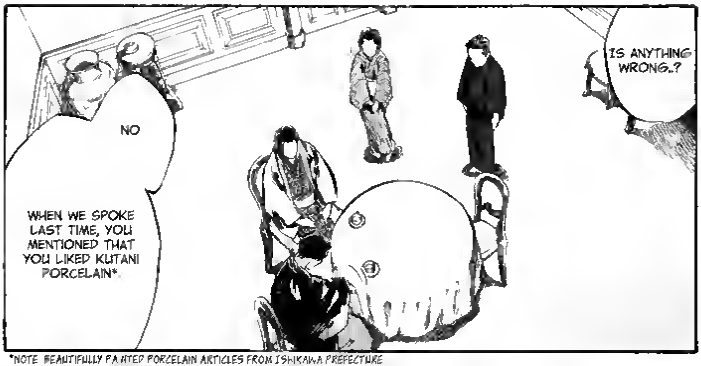
O-TAE-SAN. WAS IT?

YES
I WAS SO SHOCKED...


DO YOU HAVE SOME TIME TODAY, TOO?

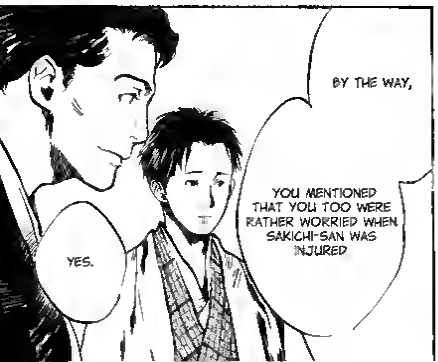
THANKS FOR TALKING TO US AFTER WE HAD SPOKEN TO TOKIWA-SAN
YOU'RE WELCOME.


EHM...



*NOTE BEAUTIFULLY PAINTED PORCELAIN ARTICLES FROM ISHIKAWA PREFECTURE

I REMEMBERED THAT I HAD ONE I HAD STACKED SOMEWHERE AS SOON AS I RECEIVED IT.
IT'S AN INCENSE CONTAINER.
EH? CAN I HAVE IT? REALLY?



THERE WAS TOKIWA-SAMA AND NOW SAKICHI-SAN.
AND THEN NAOSHI-SAMA AFTER THAT, RIGHT?
I'M REALLY SCARED...
I UNDER-STAND...
DID THE POLICE CONTACT YOU TO SAY ANYTHING?
NO, NOTHING.
IS THAT SO...?
THE TRUTH IS THAT I TOO WOULD LIKE TO DO SOMETHING TO CATCH THOSE GUYS.
THAT'S WHY THERE'S SOME-THING I WANT YOU TO TELL ME.

NO MATTER HOW I TURN IT IN MY HEAD,
I CAN'T HELP THINKING THAT ALL THIS HAS TO DO WITH THE UPROAR IN THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY
IN THAT CASE, THE CULPRIT MUST BE CAPTURED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO KNOW.
WAS NAOSHI-SAN HERE THE DAY SAKICHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED?
DO YOU REMEMPER AT WHAT TIME HE WENT HOME?
IT WAS BEFORE DINNER
WE ASKED HIM TO STAY FOR DINNER, BUT HE SAID HE'LL CHOKE ON THE FOOD IF HE HAS TO EAT IT WITH HIS RELATIVES...
WHAT TIME WAS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO IMPLY HERE...
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, SAKICHI-SAN.
BUT THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT
I, TOO, DON'T WANT NAOSHI-SAN TO BE THE CRIMINAL
BUT EVEN SO...
IF THERE IS EVEN THE SMALLEST POSSIBILITY, WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE
WE SHOULDN'T EXPOSE TOKIWA-SAN TO DANGER JUST BECAUSE OF OUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS

I'M SORRY, BUT MY LEG HURTS, SO YOU'LL EXCUSE ME FOR SITTING DOWN.
O-TAE, A CHAIR...
OF COURSE, PLEASE.
O-TAE-SAN, YOU TAKE A SEAT, TOO
AND NOW, LET'S START THIS FROM THE BEGINNING...

AT WHAT TIME DID NAOSHI-SAN LEAVE THIS HOUSE?
AFTER SIX... MAYBE IT WAS CLOSER TO SEVEN
YES, BECAUSE TOKIWA-SAMA HAD TOLD US TO PREPARE DINNER FOR A LATER HOUR THAN USUAL
WHEN DID THE FLAMING DEMON ATTACK YOU, SAKICHI-SAN?
.....
THE SHOP WAS ABOUT TO CLOSE, SO...
AROUND EIGHT
WITH A RICKSHAW, THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME TO GET TO GINZA...

DID NAOSHI-SAN USE A RICKSHAW WHEN HE WAS GOING HOME?
YES.
HE CALLED A RICKSHAW FOR HIRE NAMED MATSUROKU-SAN AND GOT IN.
BUT HE SAID HE WASN'T GOING HOME.
DID HE HAVE AN APPOINT-MENT SOME-WHERE ELSE..?
HE SAID HE WANTED TO TAKE A STROLL IN THE LIVE-LY PART OF TOWN..
HE HEADED FOR SHIODOME AND DISMISSED MATSUROKU-SAN NEAR THE RICKSHAW STAND THERE AND THAT WAS THAT.
HMMM.
SO THE NEWS THAT SAKICHI-SAN HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY THE FLAM-ING DEMON CAME WHEN TOKIWA-SAN REMAINED WITH THE REST OF THE RELATIVES, RIGHT?
YES THE HEAD OF THE CLINIC CONTACTED HIM..
..WHEN THEY WERE DRINKING SAKE AFTER THE DINNER.

EH?
SHE HAD ALREADY GONE HOME.
SHE...
WHAT WAS KIKUE-SAN DOING WHEN IT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW MYSELF, BUT..
BUT HAD NOT ACCOMPANIED YOU THERE..
WHEN WE INQUIRED ABOUT YOU, WE WERE TOLD THAT SHE HAD VISITED YOU IN THE HOSPITAL,
IT SEEMS THAT SHE WASN'T WITH ME, AT LEAST WHEN THEY BROUGHT ME IN

ANYWAY I LOOK AT IT, THIS SEEMS...
IF NOT SUSPICIOUS, THEN AT LEAST UNNATURAL...
.....
ACCORDING TO WHAT I HEARD FROM TOKIWA-SAN MUCH LATER ON,
SHE WENT HOME WHEN SHE DIDN'T SEE ME ANY-WHERE.
AND WHEN SHE HEARD SOMEONE HAD FALLEN OFF THE BALCONY, SHE MUST HAVE MADE THE CONNECTION WITH SAKICHI-SAN...
I THINK IT'S ONLY NATURAL TO ASK PEOPLE AROUND HER WHAT WAS HA'PENING...
WHEN THE FLAMING DEMON APPEARED, THAT MUST HAVE CAUSED A TERRIBLE UPROAR AT THE IZAWA-YA.

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE JUST WENT HOME WITHOUT CHECKING IF IT REALLY WERE HIM.
I WAS OUT ON AN ERRAND FROM TOKIWA-SAMA, SO I DON'T KNOW
.....
THEN WHAT ABOUT YESTERDAY?
AH! THERE'S ONE MORE THING!

AND TOKIWA-SAN WAS..?
IN HIS ROOM.
ALL OF THE HOUSEHOLD STAFF WAS HERE.
SAKICHI-SAN WAS THE ONLY ONE OUT
THERE WAS LIGHT IN HIS WINDOWS ALL THE TIME, SO I THINK THAT WAS TRUE.
HE SAID HE HAD A LOT TO STUDY...
BECAUSE THERE WAS LIGHT IN THE WINDOWS?
YES

WE DO NOT INTERRUPT HIS STUDIES!
YOU MEAN, YOU DIDN'T GO IN AND SEE FOR YOURSELF?
IT MAY BE TRUE THAT NOBODY SAW TOKIWA-SAMA AFTER HE RETIRED TO HIS STUDY,
BUT HE DEFINITELY IS NOT THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO COULD KILL ANYONE!

OF COURSE, I THINK SO, TOO
YES... OF COURSE.
WHAT DO YOU TWO THINK?
THE CRIMINAL IS IN THIS HOUSEHOLD?
SO AFTER ALL...

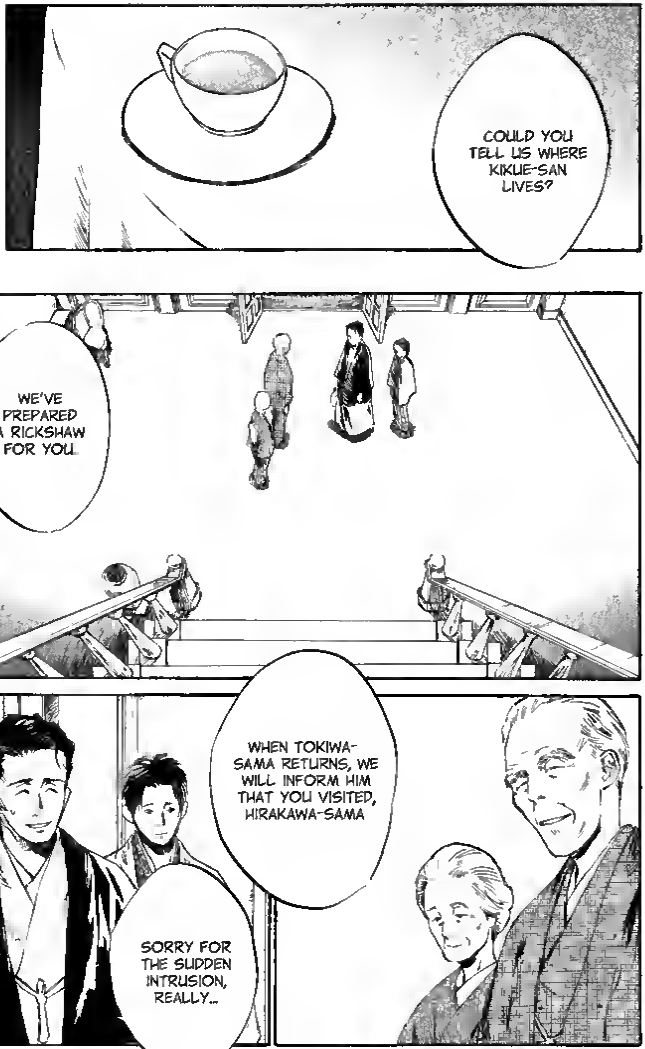
DO YOU THINK THAT IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PROBLEM WITH THE INHERITANCE?
IF THAT'S SO, IT MEANS THE CRIMINAL MUST BE SOMEONE INTERESTED IN ALL THIS.
BUT...
I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT IS NOT TRUE.
IT MAY BE TRUE THAT NAOSHI-SAMA IS NOT INVOLVED IN THIS,
BUT THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE WHO WISH TO SEE HIM INHERIT.

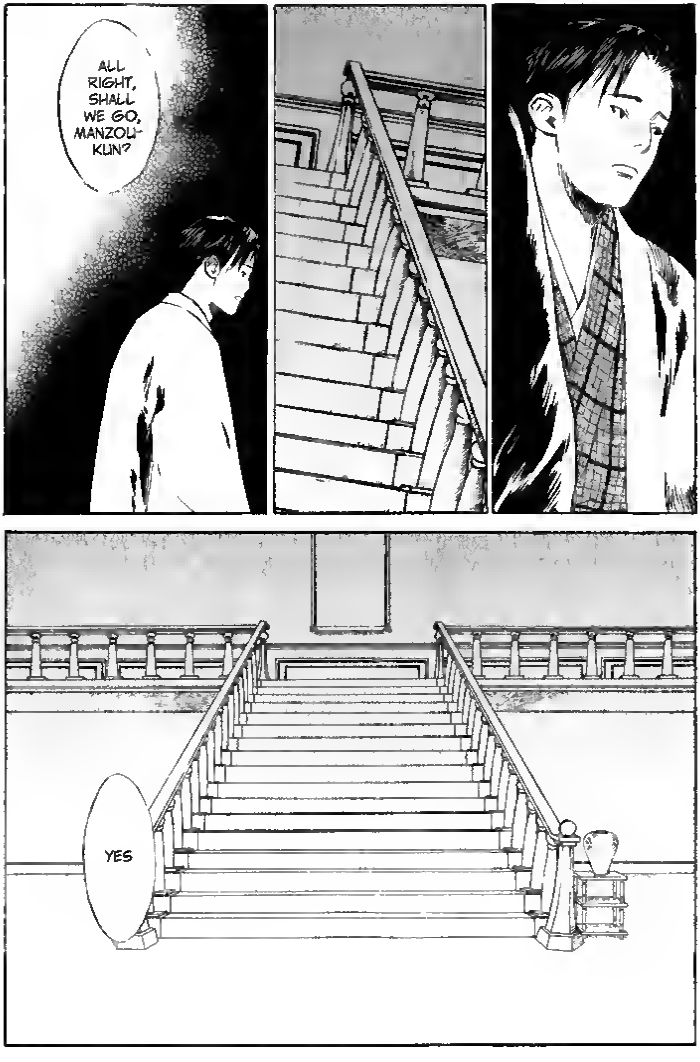
EVEN SO, WHY DID SOMETHING SO TERRIBLE HAD TO HAPPEN TO YOU, SAKICHI-SAN?
BUT!
I THINK... IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT AMONG THEM THERE IS SOMEONE WHO SAW NO OTHER CHOICE...
...MISTAKEN FOR TOKIWA-SAN, AFTER ALL.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN...
KIKUE-SAN?
WHAT IF HE WAS MISTAKEN FOR KIKUE-SAN?
I THINK THAT IS THE MOST LOGICAL EXPLANATION, BUT I CAN'T HELP THINKING...
THAT'S RIGHT.

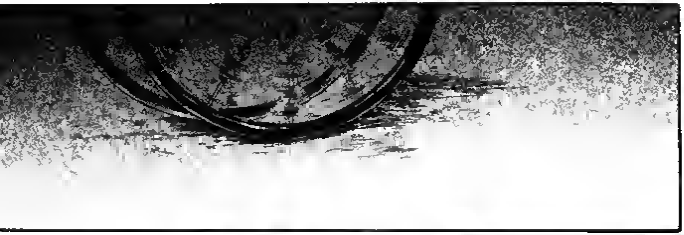
AH..!
WHAT?
NO MATTER HOW SIMILAR A MAN AND A WOMAN MAY LOOK FROM BEHIND,
AT LEAST THE KIMONO AND THE OBI AND THE WAY IT WAS TIED SHOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT...
...AT THE TIME, I WAS WEARING A SHAWL I RECEIVED FROM KIKUE-SAN.
I DIDN'T TELL YOU BEFORE BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS RELEVANT, BUT...
EH?
THERE WAS STRONG WIND AND IT WAS COLD SO I BORROWED IT FROM HER.

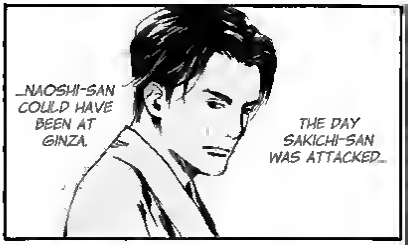
MOREOVER, THAT DAY BOTH SHE AND I WERE WEARING DARK KIMONOS
IT WAS A VERY BIG SHAWL.
THERE WAS NO LIGHT ON THE BALCONY
IT WAS DARK AND THERE WAS A SHORTLY BUILT PERSON WITH A BIG SHAWL.
IT'S NOT IMPO-SSIBLE...
...THAT I WAS MISTAKEN FOR KIKUE-SAN

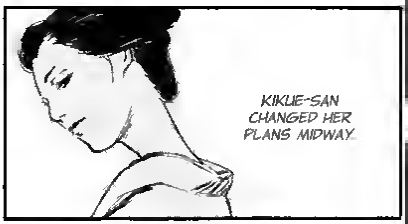
IF, FOR ARGUMENT'S SAKE, WE SAY HE MURDERED TOKIWA-SAMA,
DOES THAT MEAN THAT NAOSHI-SAMA WILL INHERIT AUTOMATICALLY?
RATHER THAN THAT, IT SEEMS MUCH MORE REASONABLE TO THINK...
...THAT SOMEONE WHO WANTS TOKIWA-SAN TO INHERIT AT ANY RATE IS TRYING TO GET RID OF THE BIG OBSTACLE KIKUE
SAKICHI-SAN...


COULD YOU TELL US WHERE KIKUE-SAN LIVES?
WE'VE PREPARED A RICKSHAW FOR YOU.
WHEN TOKIWA-SAMA RETURNS, WE WILL INFORM HIM THAT YOU VISITED, HIRAKAWA-SAMA
SORRY FOR THE SUDDEN INTRUSION, REALLY...


ALL RIGHT, SHALL WE GO, MANZOU-KUN?
YES




...NAOSHI-SAN COULD HAVE BEEN AT GINZA
THE DAY SAKICHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED...

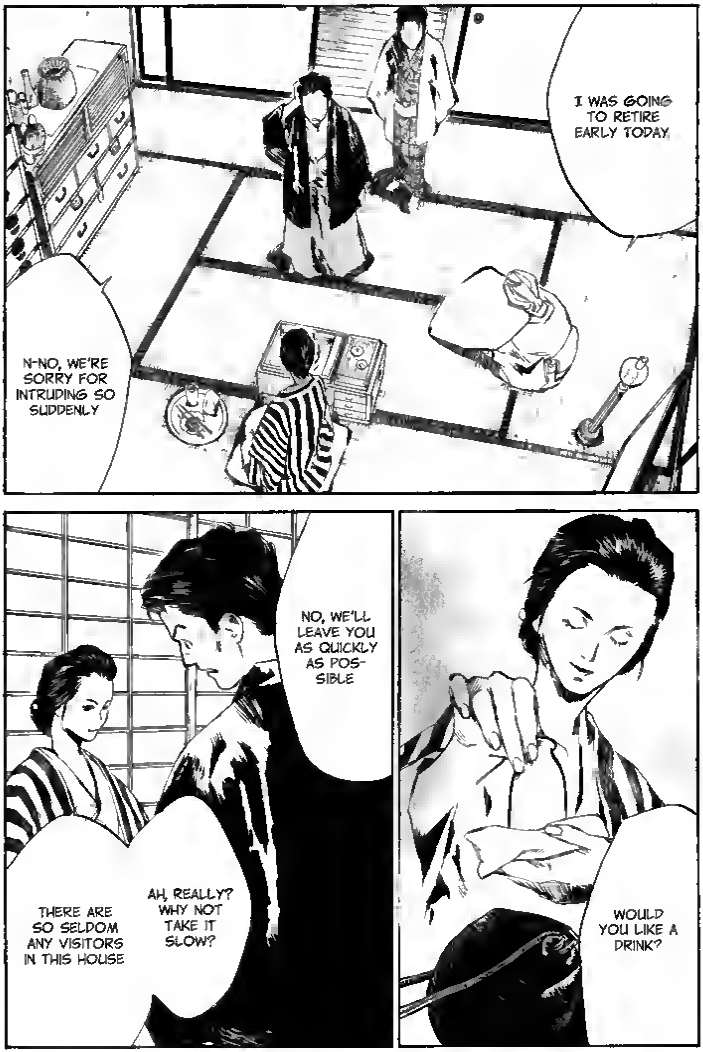

KIKUE-SAN CHANGED HER PLANS MIDWAY.

AND...

THE DAY NAOSHI-SAN WAS ATTACKED..
..TOKIWA-SAN AND SAKICHI-SAN COULD HAVE BEEN IN ASAKUSA

Third Act.
Midnight
garden, the
fish are
going round.
(Part 5)

I WAS WONDERING WHO THAT HIRAKAWA MAN COULD BE.
AH, SO IT IS YOU
EXCUSE ME FOR THE ATTIRE


I WAS GOING TO RETIRE EARLY TODAY
N-NO, WE'RE SORRY FOR INTRUDING SO SUDDENLY
NO, WE'LL LEAVE YOU AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE
AH, REALLY? WHY NOT TAKE IT SLOW?
THERE ARE SO SELDOM ANY VISITORS IN THIS HOUSE
WOULD YOU LIKE A DRINK?

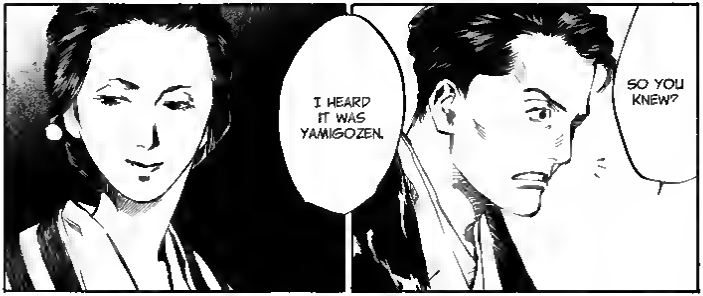
SLAM
EHM.. THERE'S SOMETHING WE NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
AH, WHAT COULD THAT BE?
OH, MY!
HO-HO-HO!

AH, EXCUSE ME
THIS IS NO LAUGHING MATTER!
THIS—
THEN I WONDER WHO DID IT
YES, THAT MAY BE SO
..SAKICHI-SAN WAS MISTAKEN FOR YOU AT THE IZAWA-YA
IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT...
IT MUST BE ONE OF THE RELATIVES
IF HE WAS ATTACKED BY MISTAKE, IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

I HAVE TOO MANY IDEAS WHO IT COULD BE
I WILL BE EXTRA CARE-FUL FROM NOW ON
BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M JUST A WEAK WOMAN.
ALL I HAVE IS THAT OLD GRANNY.
IT'S SO EASY TO PUSH HER AWAY AND KILL ME
NOT TO MENTION THAT SHE WOULD MOST LIKELY DESERT ME AND RUN.
ABOUT HER, IS SHE HERE...
...BY TAKATSU-KASA-SAMA'S RECOMMEN-DATION?

BUT, OH, WELL, NO MATTER HOW THOROUGHLY YOU MAY SEARCH, YOU WON'T FIND ANYONE WHO IS ON GOOD TERMS WITH ME.
A TAKATSUKASA PERSON COULDN'T AFFORD TO STRANGLE ME IN MY SLEEP.
WHAT A THOUGHT!
...
THE TWO OF YOU ARE VERY KIND TO COME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO WARN ME

I HEARD NAOSHI SAN HAS BEEN ATTACKED
OR HAVE YOU COME TO INSPECT THE ENEMY'S MOVEMENTS?


I HEARD IT WAS YAMIGOZEN.
SO YOU KNEW?

AS FOR ME, I'M USED TO FULL WHITE MAKEUP AND HEAVY CLOTHING
ALTHOUGH I'M NO "YOUNG PRINCESS" MATERIAL.

SUCH THINGS ARE NOT WHAT MOTIVATES HIRAKAWA-SAN.
KIKUE-SAN.
LISTEN TO HIS ADVISE AND HIRE YOUNG MAIDS AND NEW MAN-SERVANTS
PLEASE DO.
VERY WELL.
BECAUSE THERE IS SOMEONE WHO WILL GRIEVE A LOT IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO YOU, KIKUE-SAN

I CARE ABOUT MY OWN WELL-BEING PRETTY MUCH, TOO
I WILL BE VERY VIGILANT
KIKUE-SAN,
ABOUT THE TIME WHEN TOKIWA-SAN WAS ATTACKED...
IT HAPPENED WHEN HE WAS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM HERE, RIGHT?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT...

IT'S NOT AS IF I WAS UNABLE TO CHANGE IN A HURRY, FOLLOW HIM, CATCH UP WITH HIM AND ATTACK HIM
IT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER HE LEFT HIS PLACE, SO...
KIKUE-SAN!
YAMIGOZEN ATTACKED ONE MORE PERSON RIGHT BEFORE THAT
YOU COULD NOT HAVE PUT ON THE MAKEUP AND THE HEAVY CLOTHES AND LAID IN WAIT FOR THAT VICTIM.
YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY BE INVOLVED IN ALL THIS.
AND FIRST OF ALL, WHY WOULD YOU ATTACK TOKIWA-SAN?

YES.
TO THE CHIROU HALL.
DID YOU GO OUT SOMEWHERE YESTERDAY?
.....
IT COULD BE AN ACT, TO PROTECT TOKIWA-SAN.
IF ONLY NAOSHI-SAN WERE ATTACKED THEN TOKIWA-SAN WOULD BE SUSPECTED.
WE ARE SERIOUSLY AND HONESTLY LOOKING FOR THE CRIMINAL

WE WANT TO END THIS UPROAR,
AND LET BOTH TOKIWA-SAN AND NAOSHI-SAN LIVE IN PEACE
DON'T YOU WISH FOR THE SAME THING, KIKUE-SAN?

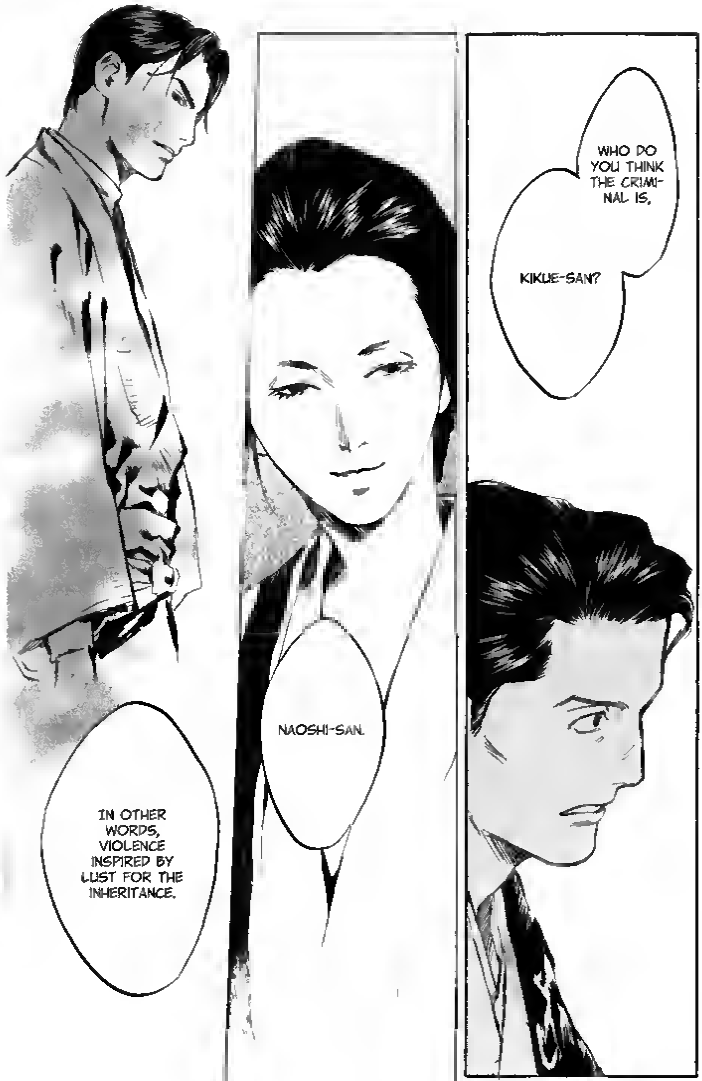
KIKUE-SAN...
THERE WILL NEVER COME A DAY WHEN TOKIWA-SAN WILL LIVE IN PEACE.
WITH A GEISHA FOR A WIFE,
.....
PEOPLE TALK OF THE EQUALITY OF THE FOUR SOCIAL CLASSES*
BUT THEY AREN'T EQUAL AT ALL.
IN ANY AGE OF THE WORLD, THE POOR ONES ARE REPRESSED.

*NOTE: SOCIETY WAS DIVIDED INTO SAMURAI, FARMERS, ARTISANS AND MERCHANTS (FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST STATUS) AT THE TIME

POOR WOMEN, IN PARTICULAR, ARE MORE REPRESSED EVEN THAN POOR MEN
I WAS ALONE AT HOME ALL DAY YESTER-DAY
THE OLD WOMAN WILL TESTIFY TO THAT,
IF SHE'S IN THE MOOD

YES
BECAUSE SAKICHI WASN'T THERE.
THEN, ABOUT IZAWA-YA.
WE HEARD YOU WENT ON AHEAD AND LEFT?
I KNEW
DID YOU KNOW HE HAD BEEN PUSHED FROM THE BALCONY?
THAT'S WHY I WENT HOME ON MY OWN
BUT I COULDN'T EXPECT AN INJURED PERSON TO SEE ME HOME, RIGHT?

DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING STRANGE ON YOUR WAY HOME?
.....
BESIDES, I'M SURE SAKICHI WOULD NOT HAVE WANTED ME TO GET HURT.
NO, NOBODY.
...OR ANY OTHER SUSPICIOUS PERSON?
THE NEWS-SELLER THAT WAS SEEN AT THE IZAWA-YA...
AND LET THIS REMAIN JUST BETWEEN US..
IN THAT CASE..


WHO DO YOU THINK THE CRIMINAL IS, KIKUE-SAN?
NAOSHI-SAN.
IN OTHER WORDS, VIOLENCE INSPIRED BY LUST FOR THE INHERITANCE.

AH, IN THAT CASE SAKICHI-SAN MUST HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN FOR TOKIWA-SAN AT THE IZAWA-YA.
IT'S ALL AN ACT.
BESIDES, HE WAS IN ASAKUSA...
BUT NAOSHI-SAN KNEW IT WAS SAKICHI-SAN GOING TO THE IZAWA-YA.
IT MIGHT BE SOMEONE IN NAOSHI-SAN'S SURROUNDINGS DOING IT.
LIKE O-CHIYO-SAN OR THAT LITTLE GIRL, MARINO OR WHATEVER HER NAME WAS...

WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF IT WEREN'T FOR HIM?
SAYING THAT IT'S ALL AN ACT IS..

NAOSHI-SAN MANAGED TO ESCAPE SAFE AND SOUND..
..ONLY BECAUSE THAT MAN, THE KUROKO, STOPPED YAMIGOZEN.

DIDN'T NAOSHI-SAN HAVE TWO MANSERVANTS?
FURTHERMORE, HE HAS FRIENDS AMONG THE DEMOCRATS, SO IT MAY BE ONE OF THEM.

THEN THAT KUROKO IS AN ACCOMPLICE
CAN YOU THINK OF ANYONE SUITABLE?

LET ME THANK YOU.
...FOR YOUR KINDNESS

YOUR BUSINESS HERE IS FINISHED NOW, ISN'T IT?

LEAVE BEFORE WEIRD RUMORS START TO SPREAD
IT SEEMS THAT TOKIWA-SAN WASN'T HERE YESTERDAY
THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS
—

NAOSHI-SAN?
I'M SORRY, BUT COULD YOU COME WITH ME ON ONE MORE VISIT?
MANZOU-KUN...
YES
LET'S SEE HOW HIS RECOVERY IS GOING
IN THAT CASE, LET US MAKE A SMALL DETOUR BEFORE GOING TO HIS PLACE
EH?
DETOUR?
I WANT TO DO WHAT YOU JUST DID, HIRAKAWA-SAN.

I'M HIRAKAWA. I WAS HERE YESTERDAY.
I'M SORRY TO INTRUDE SO LATE IN THE EVENING
HOW IS NAOSHI-SAN DOING?
AH.
THANK YOU FOR ASKING
PLEASE, COME IN.
FORTUNATELY, IT SEEMS IT WASN'T ANYTHING SERIOUS
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THIS IS FOR YOU.
I'M AFRAID IT'S JUST SIMPLE SWEETS BOUGHT ON A LOW SALARY LIKE MINE AND UNWORTHY OF TAKATSUKASA-SAMA, BUT...
AH, MY.
THANK YOU FOR THE KIND GESTURE.
NO, IT'S NOTHING.
PLEASE, DO COME IN.
NAOSHI IS OUT AT THE MOMENT, BUT HE WILL BE BACK SOON.
COME ON, COME IN.

IN THAT CASE, THANK YOU FOR THE HOSPITALITY

I HEARD YOU ARE FROM THE MOURI FEUDAL LORDS' FAMILY, MADAM?
MY FATHER WAS A FEUDAL RETAINER,
BUT HE WAS RETIRED AND HELPED HIROMICHI-SAMA A LOT
HE TOOK CARE OF THINGS AT THE SHIKOU* CLUB...
SO YOU WENT TO THE SHIKOU CLUB, TOO, MADAM?

*NOTE HIROMICHI'S CLUB FOR MERCHANTS TRADING OVERSEAS AND FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN JAPAN

AND O-SAWA-SAN AND HATSUKO-SAMA, TOO?
YES
WHEN THE PEOPLE FROM KYOTO LIVED IN YOKOHAMA, THEY DID, TOO.
I SOMETIMES HAD THE HONOR OF ACCOMPANY-ING HIM
IT'S NOT A VERY APPROPRIATE THING TO SAY, BUT IT SEEMS SHE HAD QUITE A FEW PECULIARITIES TO HER CHARACTER.
SPEAKING OF HATSUKO-SAMA,
.....
WHENEVER THE THREE OF US ACCOMPANIED HIM, HATSUKO-SAMA ABSOLUTELY REFUSED TO COME, TOO.
YES.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT..

SHE WAS THE LEGAL WIFE
.....
SHE NEVER EVEN WISHED TO MEET US
WHEN NAOSHI WAS BORN, IT SEEMS SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO RAISE HIM HERSELF.
BUT AS SOON AS HIROMICHI-SAMA PASSED AWAY, SHE GAVE HIM TO ME AND THAT WAS THE END OF IT...
BUT I DIDN'T HEAR IT DIRECTLY FROM HATSUKO-SAMA.
SO MAYBE IT'S JUST WHAT HIROMICHI-SAMA TOLD ME.

I NEVER KNOW WHAT PEOPLE OF HIGH SOCIAL STANDING ARE THINKING...
MAKING YOU LEAVE...
...RIGHT AFTER LORD HIROMICHI PASSED AWAY WAS VERY BLUNT OF HER
IT WAS
NO, NO.
WHAT I JUST SAID WAS VERY RUDE OF ME.
AH! PLEASE, EXCUSE ME
WERE YOU?
I WAS RATHER SHOCKED MYSELF TO LEARN THAT THE ELDEST SON WAS BANISHED FROM THE HOUSE.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOU SHOULD FEEL DISPLEASURE ABOUT IT, MADAM.

I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THAT...
I THINK IT WILL SERVE THE UNIVERSAL JUSTICE...
...IF NAOSHI-SAN WERE TO INHERIT THE FAMILY...
IF HE SAYS HIMSELF HE DOESN'T NEED IT, THEN ISN'T THIS ENOUGH?
THERE'S HATSUKO-SAMA'S WILL...
I THINK THAT EVEN IF WE DON'T LIVE IN A SPLENDID MANSION,
IT'S ENOUGH THAT MY SON AND I ARE TOGETHER, SAFE AND SOUND
AND NAOSHI INSISTS THAT HE DOESN'T NEED THE INHERITANCE...

IF IT'S TRUE...
THIS IS A VERY MODEST, PRAISEWORTHY VIEW.
TOKIWA-SAN IS REALLY A VERY GENTLE PERSON.
...THAT HE DOESN'T NEED THE INHERITANCE.
ALTHOUGH TOKIWA-SAN, TOO, SAYS..
DID HE?
AFTER HATSUKO-SAMA'S FUNERAL, HE CAME ESPECIALLY TO ASK US TO MOVE BACK TO THE PRINCIPAL HOUSE.
HE HAS BEEN VERY GOOD TO US, TOO...

HOWEVER, BOTH NAOSHI AND I LIKE THIS HOUSE.
WE HAVE THE HOUSE AND THE AGRICULTURAL LAND HIROMICHI-SAMA LEFT US.
AND I'M DOING SOME NEEDLEWORK, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.

IF WE COULD KEEP ON LIVING HERE SAFE AND IN GOOD HEALTH, WE DON'T NEED AN INHERITANCE.
AT FIRST, I DID HAVE SOME REGRETS, BUT...

NAOSHI RUBS MY SHOULDERS WHENEVER I'M TIRED FROM THE NEEDLEWORK
AT DURING THOSE TIMES,
I REALLY THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING I NEED
THIS WOMAN...

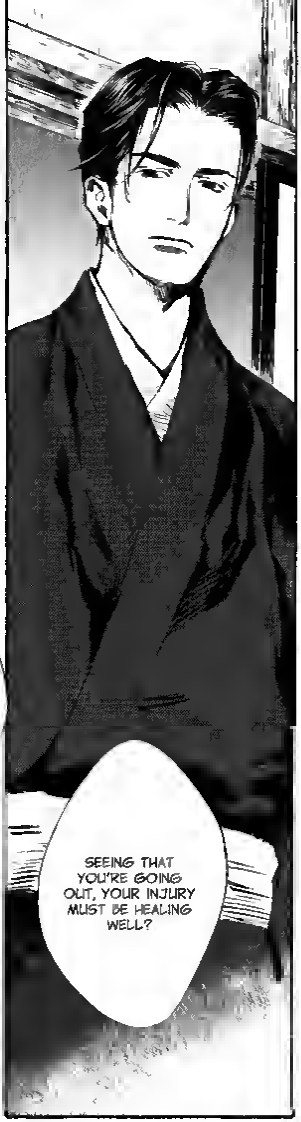
AH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I REALLY THINK THAT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL AND PRAISEWORTHY OF YOU.
..COULDN'T ATTACK ANYONE FOR THE SAKE OF AN INHERITANCE.
WHERE IS MARINO-SAN TODAY?
BY THE WAY,
SHE SAYS SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GET SUNBURNED DURING THE DAY,
BUT SHE LIKES TO GO OUT, SO...
EH?
SHE'S OUT.

BUT EVEN SO, GOING OUT AT SUCH AN HOUR?
SHE MUST BE A VERY PROGRESSIVE YOUNG LADY
THE NIGHTS ARE DANGEROUS THESE DAYS, SO NAOSHI SEES HER OFF TO THE RICKSHAW STAND
AH, SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS
WELL, TOKIWA-SAMA ENTRUSTED US WITH THE YOUNG LADY, SO I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING BAD, BUT...
IT SEEMS THAT MARINO-SAN ASPIRES TO BE NAOSHI-SAN'S WIFE?
SHE EITHER SLEEPS DURING THE DAY OR IS OUT, AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HER SCHOOL IS...
I THINK SHE WILL GO BACK TO THE PRINCIPLE HOUSE ANYTIME NOW
YES, ALTHOUGH NAOSHI DOESN'T SEEM TO BE INCLINED...

BECAUSE SHE'S NOT THE TYPE OF LADY WHO COULD MARRY INTO A NORMAL HOUSE AND NOT INTO ARISTOCRACY.

AH,
I THINK HE IS BACK NOW.

SORRY FOR WORRYING YOU ON MY ACCOUNT.

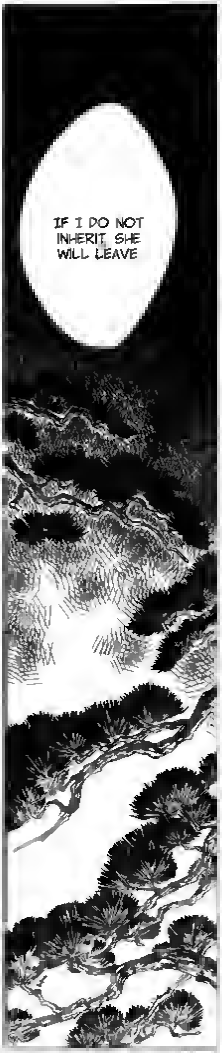

SEEING THAT YOU'RE GOING OUT, YOUR INJURY MUST BE HEALING WELL?

MOTHER IS VERY HAPPY ABOUT SOME PRESENT SHE RECEIVED FROM YOU.
THANKS FOR THAT.

SORRY ABOUT THAT
NEXT TIME I'LL BRING SENBEI
BUT IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU, I PREFER SENBEI* TO SWEETS
NOTE: BIG RICE CRACKERS
WHERE IS MARINO-SAN?
AH, HER?
SHE WOULDN'T STOP WHINING THAT SHE WANTED TO SEE THE SAKURA AT NIGHT, SO I SENT ONE OF THE MANSER-VANTS WITH HER
WHO KNOWS?
IT'S A LITTLE EARLY FOR THE SAKURA.
ISN'T IT THAT SHE JUST WANTED TO GO OUT WITH YOU, NAOSHI-SAN?

I WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING THE CHIROU HALL, TOO, BUT...
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN FASHIONABLE, SENTIMENTAL PASTIMES LIKE WATCHING THE SAKURA AT NIGHT
ALTHOUGH IT'S TRUE SHE WAS A LITTLE PUT OFF
AND I DON'T LIKE TO BE ORDERED TO ACCOMPANY ANYONE
WHAT MARINO REALLY WANTS..
...IS NOT ME BUT THE TAKATSUKASA HEIR
THAT'S QUITE COLD OF YOU.

.....
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO REFUSE?

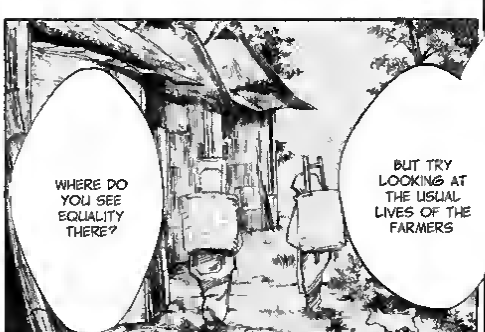

IF I DO NOT INHERIT, SHE WILL LEAVE

—OF COURSE.
BUT—

I'M NOT INTERESTED.

BUT...
DON'T YOU WANT TO REFORM THE WORLD, NAOSHI-SAN?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M NOT SUCH A CHAMPION OF JUSTICE.
BUT WE HEARD THAT YOU HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE DEMOCRATS
IF YOU HAVE THE TAKATSUKASA NAME, THE PARLIAMENTARY SEAT THAT GOES WITH THE ARISTOCRATIC TITLE AND THE FAMILY'S FINANCIAL ASSETS TO BACK YOU UP, YOU COULD REALLY DO A LOT.

I REALLY...
...USED TO MINGLE WITH SUCH PEOPLE
THE REVISION OF LAND TAX, THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEETING, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVEREIGN RIGHTS...
HOWEVER...


THEY SPEAK OF THE EQUALITY OF THE FOUR SOCIAL STRATA,
BUT TRY LOOKING AT THE USUAL LIVES OF THE FARMERS
WHERE DO YOU SEE EQUALITY THERE?

PEOPLE WHO WORRY ABOUT FIGHTING OVER HUGE CAPITALS OR BEING DISINHERITED OR WHAT NOT ARE THE LUCKY ONES.

FORGET HAVING A FORTUNE TO FIGHT OVER
IN THIS COUNTRY, THERE ARE 50,000 PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON THE EDGE OF POVERTY AND HAVE NOTHING BUT DEBTS

THE COUNTRY SQUEEZES WHAT LITTLE THEY HAVE FROM THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HONESTLY
AND ON TOP OF THAT, THE FORTUNE IT SUCKS OUT OF THEM IS IN TURN SUCKED OUT BY THE GREAT POWERS IT'S LAUGHABLE.
THE COUNTRY IS GROWING, USING THE FARMERS AS A STEPPING STONE
IT'S AN UTTER MONKEY SHOW
IF THIS COUNTRY IS FERTILIZED WITH TAXES AND MORE TAXES,
MAYBE ONE DAY IT WILL BECOME ABLE TO OPPOSE THE GREAT POWERS
BUT WHAT WILL BE NEXT? SOME NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, THIS TIME?
LIKE KOREA OR MANCHU CHINA?

ARE YOU AGAINST PROGRESS, NAOSHI-SAN? THERE ARE PEOPLE AMONG THE DEMOCRATS WHO APPEAL FOR EXPANSION OVERSEAS...
WHAT ARE THEY PLANNING TO DO, SWALLOW RUSSIA, TOO?
...
IT'S NOT RIGHT TO STEAL FROM AND OPPRESS OTHERS JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE STOLEN FROM AND OPPRESSED YOURSELF
OF COURSE I AM
IF EVEN THE DEMOCRATS THINK THIS WAY, THEN WHO IN THE WORLD REMAINS TO LEAD THIS COUNTRY BACK TO THE RIGHT TRACK?
YOU KNOW, HIRAKAWA-SAN,
I FEEL AS IF I CAN SEE THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY

FOR ME, ALL OF THIS HAS BECOME...
RIDICULOUS
I'VE APPEALED MANY TIMES THAT EXPANDING OVERSEAS GOES AGAINST THE UNIVERSAL JUSTICE,
BUT IT ALWAYS ENDED WITH THE YOUNG HOTHEADS CALLING ME A COWARD
THAT'S WHY I DON'T NEED THE TAKATSUKASA INHERITANCE.

I UNDERSTAND YOU VERY WELL
YOU, PEOPLE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS, HAVE IT EASY I ENVY YOU.
THAT'S NOT ENTIRELY SO.
BECAUSE THE LAWS FORBID US TO LIVE LIKE ROLLING STONES, WITHOUT AN ESTABLISHED OCCUPATION.
I STILL ENVY YOU
IF YOU ARE NOT ROOTED TO ONE PLACE, NOTHING STOPS YOU FROM RUNNING AWAY

THIS COUNTRY AND THIS AGE ARE FLOWING IN THE DIRECTION THEY ARE BOUND TO AND ALL WE CAN TO IS TO MOVE WITH THEM
WOULD YOU LIKE TO RUN AWAY?
THAT'S WHAT DAWNED ON ME.
IF YOU WANT TO OPPOSE THEM,
THE ONLY THING YOU CAN DO IS RUN AWAY FROM THEM
WHERE WOULD YOU GO IF YOU RAN AWAY?

BY THE WAY,
DID YOU COME TO TALK ABOUT YAMIGOZEN AND ALL THAT AGAIN?

I CAN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING NEW, YOU KNOW
EH? AH, NO
I MEAN, NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO ASK, BUT IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT WE WANTED TO KNOW HOW YOU WERE DOING...
YOU'RE VERY HONEST
THAT'S WHAT MY PRINCIPAL BUSINESS IS IN ALL THIS SO TRYING TO GLAZE IT OVER NOW WON'T DO ANYONE ANY GOOD
SO...
HAVEN'T YOU REMEMBERED ANYTHING?
ANY LITTLE THING WILL DO.

NO
IS THAT SO..?
YOU KNOW, HIRAKAWA-SAN...
I THINK I UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT CREATURE IS THINKING.

EH?
I THINK I KNOW WHAT YAMIGOZEN, OR WHATEVER, IS PLOTTING.

IT'S ALMOST OVER.

WHAT IS IT?!
TRY THINKING FOR YOURSELF

THERE WON'T BE ANY MORE VICTIMS
I WILL STOP IT

TOUKEIBUN VOLUME 2: THE END

The serial murders
proved to be linked to the
aristocratic Takatsukasa house.
Who is the target of the
Flaming Demon and
Yamigozen -
Naoshi or Tokiwa..?

Shintarou and Manzou ascertain that the goal of the criminal is connected to the inheritance struggles in the Takatsukasa family due to the fact that both Tokiwa and Naoshi were attacked by Yamigozen. Naoshi suddenly claims that he knows what she is plotting. "I will stop it," he says, but what does he really mean by that? And in the end, what in the world the Flaming Demon and Yamigozen really are?

TOUKEI IBUN
to be continued in Volume 3...

BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

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定価：本体660円＋税
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発売＝幻冬舎

東京異聞2

【作画】梶原にき
【原作】小野不由美

同年同日に生まれた直と常
帝都・東京を震撼させる連続殺人事件は、名門鷹司家を巡る家督争いなのか

大人気小野不由美の世界を精鋭梶原にきが完全漫画化!!

月刊コミックバーズにて大好評連載中!!

火炎魔人と閻御前による殺人事件が続く帝都・東京——。元老院議員鷹司の次男・常とその使用人が襲われたことから、事件の狙いが鷹司家という可能性が出てきた。新太郎と万造は、鷹司家の長男・直のもとを訪れ、嫡子のいない鷹司家の複雑な事情を訊く。そしてついに直までが閻御前に襲われ……!?

月刊コミックバーズ・毎月12日発売!!
東京異聞]大人気連載中!!!

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詳しくは幻冬舎コミックスHP http://www.gentosha-co.jp/comics/をご覧ください。

❖梶原にきのコミックス❖
バーズコミックスルチルコレクション
[月と水の夜]①②
[マドンナの片想い]
大好評発売中!!

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東京異聞 2

【作画】
梶原にき
Kajiwara Niki
【原作】
小野不由美
Ono Fuyumi
（新潮文庫「東京異聞」より）

BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

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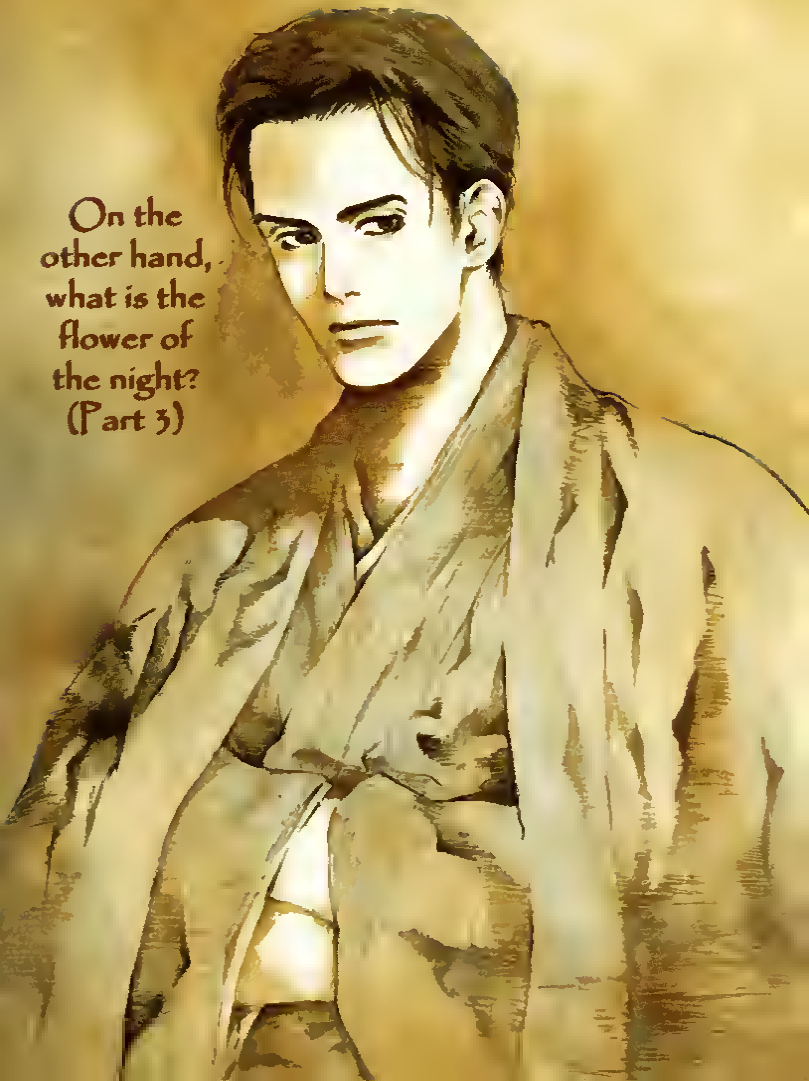
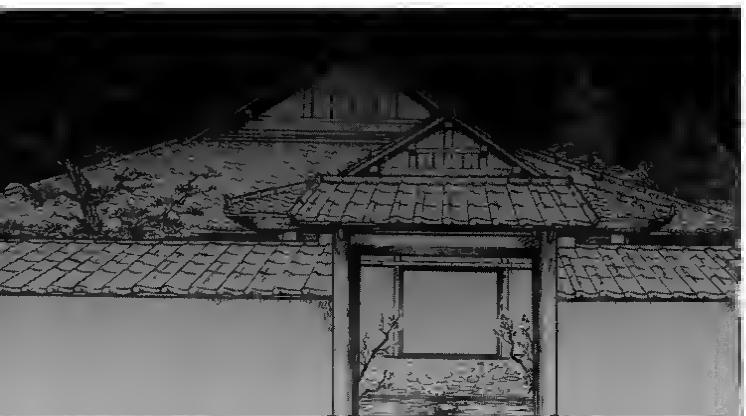
Second Act.

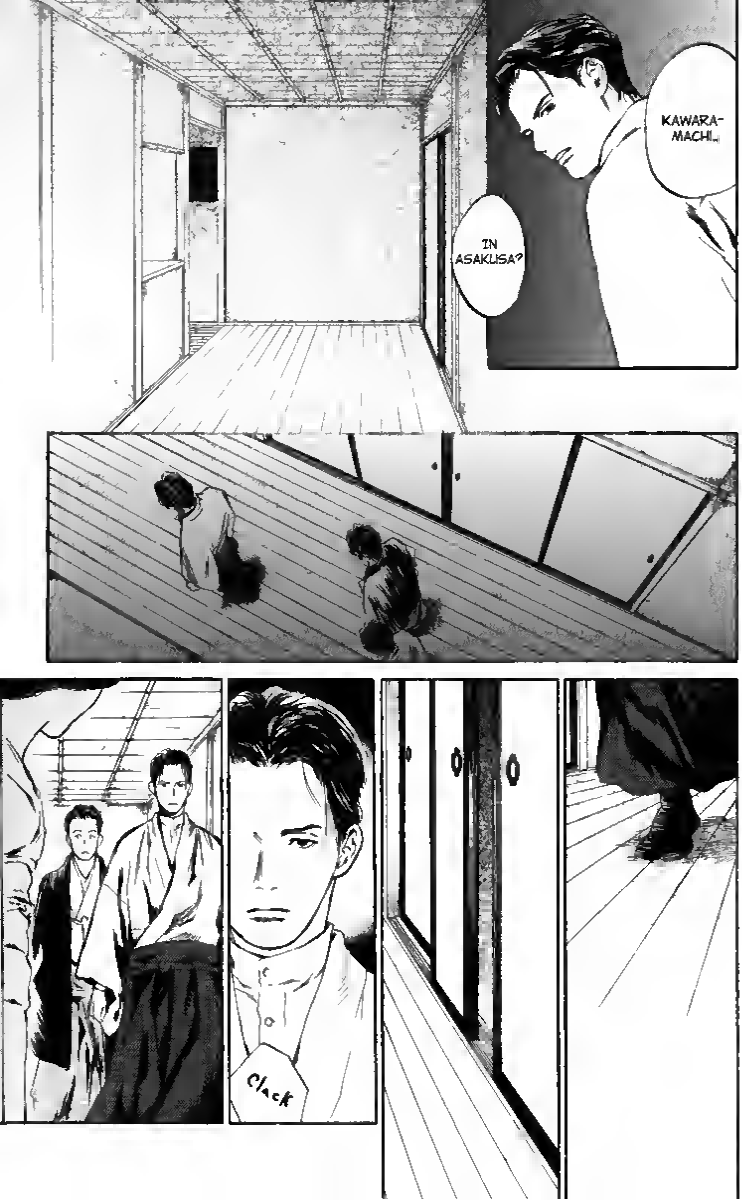
On the other hand, what is the flower of the night? (Part 3)



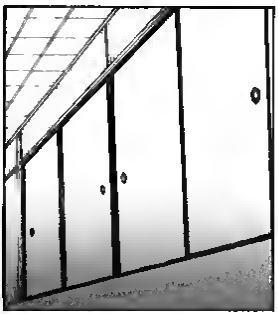
!
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE VERY RARE OCCASIONS WHEN I'M CALLED TAKATSUKASA NAOHIRO.
NAKAHATA NAOSHI
WHAT? AREN'T YOU COMING?
DIDN'T YOU HAVE BUSINESS WITH ME?



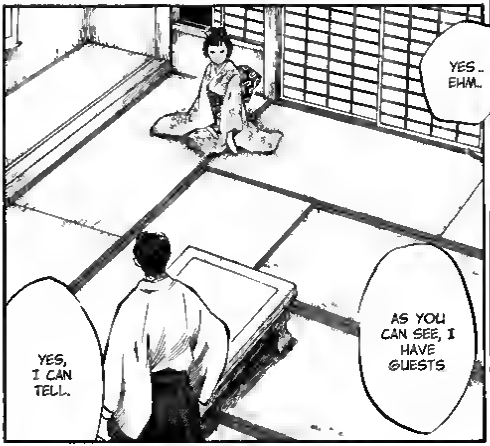
I DIDN'T ASK YOU, BUT...
DO WE HAVE BUSINESS WITH HIM?
Absolutely
YES
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
Left
EACH AND EVERYONE IS HIDING SOMETHING
WE HAVE NO CHOICE LEFT BUT TO ACT CANDIDLY
BY THE WAY,
I DIDN'T CATCH YOUR COMPANION'S NAME
I'M MANZOU, FROM KAWARAMACHI


KAWARA-MACHI...
IN ASAKUSA?
Click

DON'T DISTURB US



YOU'RE HERE?
Snggle
YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE SUCH AN OPENLY HOSTILE FACE.


YES, I CAN TELL.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I HAVE GUESTS

YES.. EHM..
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? JUST GET IN.

I AM NAOSHI-SAMA'S FIANCEE
MY NAME IS KUJOU MARINO

WELCOME

ALTHOUGH NAOSHI-SAMA DOESN'T GIVE ME HIS CONSENT
BY THE WAY, KUJOU IS THE HOUSE LORD HIROMICHI IS ORIGINALLY FROM...
YES, BUT I'M KUJOU ONLY IN NAME
IF MY BECOMING TAKATSUKASA-SAMA'S WIFE IS SUCH A BIG PROBLEM,
THEN IT'S ALL RIGHT BY ME TO JUST ASK THE MAIN HOUSE TO ADOPT ME AS A FOSTER DAUGHTER
Giggle
THE TRUTH IS THAT I'LL BE GOING TO GIRLS SCHOOL, SO I'LL ONLY BE THERE TEMPORARILY.
NAOSHI-SAMA, DON'T TELL ME YOU FINALLY DID SOMETHING?
WHAT UNUSUAL GUESTS!
COME TO INTERVIEW NAOSHI-SAMA...
Ah!
AND YOU ARE?
I'M HIRAKAWA FROM TEITO NIPPOU.
THIS IS MANZOU.

N-NO...
IT'S NOT SUCH A BIG DEAL AS AN INTERVIEW...
THEN, WHAT HAVE YOU COME FOR?
CUT IT OUT ALREADY.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU. GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM
AH, MY
IF IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU, NAOSHI-SAMA, THEN IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ME
LET'S GET TO THE POINT
...
THE TRUTH IS,
I'M INVESTIGATING THE MATTERS CONCERNING THE FLAMING DEMON AND YAMIGOZEN...

TOKIWA WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN.
SO THAT'S WHY YOU CAME HERE TO ASK ABOUT NAOSHI-SAMA.
YES.
ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T EXPECT TO MEET HIM IN PERSON.
THAT'S HOW WE REACHED YOUR HOUSE
THE TRUTH IS, I'M COMPLETELY AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT'S GOING ON.
AH,
WHAT AN HONEST PERSON.
HIRAKAWA-SAN,
YOU THINK THAT YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE UPROAR AT THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE, CORRECT?
EHM, NO, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...
NAOSHI-SAMA HAS NEVER HAPPENED TO MEET EITHER THE FLAMING DEMON OR YAMIGOZEN, YOU KNOW?

THERE'S NO OTHER REASON WHY YOU WOULD BE COMING HERE
YOU'RE RIGHT..
SO, WAS THIS TOKIWA-SAN'S SUGGESTION?
OR KIKUE-SAN'S?
YES, IT WAS KIKUE-SAN'S
DO YOU KNOW HER?
YES
ACTUALLY MY FATHER WANTED TO GIVE ME TO TOKIWA-SAN.
BECAUSE HE IS "THE TRUE HEIR OF THE TAKATSUKASA." THAT'S WHY I USED TO LIVE IN THE MANSION AT AZABU AT FIRST.
BUT THEN HE MET KIKUE-SAN AND IT BECAME ABSURD FOR ME TO REMAIN THERE
ABSURD..?
I DON'T HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST INTENTION TO COMPETE WITH KIKUE-SAN OVER TOKIWA-SAN.

I UNDERSTAND..
BESIDES, TOKIWA-SAN WAS SO BUSY TRYING TO GET INTO KIKUE-SAN'S GOOD GRACES, THAT HE BECAME ABSOLUTELY UNRELIABLE.
GOOD THING I LEARNED THAT NAOSHI-SAN IS ACTUALLY THE ELDEST SON BEFORE I RETURNED TO MY OWN HOME.
SO, THAT'S HOW YOU CAME HERE?
THAT'S RIGHT
AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT WAS MY FATHER'S WISH THAT I SHOULD MARRY THE TAKATSUKASA HEIR
I WAS VERY GLAD THAT TOKIWA-SAN WASN'T THE ELDEST SON.
AFTER ALL, EVEN I CAN FEEL SUCH A THING AS LOVE
A-HAH..
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU LET KIKUE-SAN'S WORDS INFLUENCE YOU SO MUCH AS TO COME ALL THE WAY HERE...
AT SUCH TIMES, SHOULDN'T YOU FIRST CHECK OUT THOSE AROUND TOKIWA-SAN, THE INTERESTED PARTY?

WOULDN'T THAT BE STRANGE?
ISN'T TOKIWA-SAN PLANNING TO TAKE KIKUE-SAN AS A WIFE...?
FOR EXAM-PLE...
KIKUE-SAN?
DO YOU THINK A WOMAN OF GEISHA BACKGROUND CAN ENTER THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY?
NEITHER THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT NOR THE RELATIVES WILL EVER ALLOW IT.
NOT TO MENTION THAT TOKIWA-SAN'S MOST TRUSTED SERVANT, SAKICHI,
HATES KIKUE-SAN MORE THAN ANYONE IN THAT FAMILY...
AH, BUT OF COURSE, ALL OF THESE ARE MERE SPECU-LATIONS
...

TOKIWA-SAN STAGED ALL THIS IN ORDER TO DISGRACE NAOSHI-SAMA,
WHO IS THE ELDEST SON OF THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE, WHATEVER MIGHT BE SAID
OR MAYBE IT HAPPENED LIKE THIS?
"BUT THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE SHOULD BELONG TO MY ELDER BROTHER,
TOKIWA-SAN... I DON'T THINK HE'S THAT KIND OF PERSON.
BECAUSE I'M ONLY THE SECOND SON..."
AND IF THAT'S HOW IT WAS,
THEN WHY WAS SAKICHI ATTACKED?
AH.

BUT EVEN TOKIWA-SAN HIMSELF WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN.
IF SAKICHI WERE TO BE ATTACKED, ALL SUSPICIONS TOWARDS TOKIWA-SAN WOULD BE DISPERSED
BESIDES, SAKICHI WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR TOKIWA-SAN.
I THOUGHT NOT.
!
IS THERE SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY SAW THE ATTACK?
WHO ACTUALLY IS THE ONE PLOTTING EVIL?
THINK OVER YOUR OPTIONS CAREFULLY

LET ME SEE YOU OFF
AH-
YES...
SORRY FOR INTRUDING ON YOU...

AH..
ARE YOU LEAVING ALREADY?
I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL A TOMBOY

I DON'T WANT YOU TO PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN WHAT SHE SAID
TOKIWA IS A COWARD
HE DOESN'T HAVE THE BACKBONE TO TRY TO BRING ME DOWN
AND MOST OF ALL, I WAS WITH TOKIWA WHEN SAKICHI WAS ATTACKED.
YES, I HEARD YOU WERE WITH RELATIVES..
I WAS SUMMONED AND ASKED IF I WAS GOING TO LEAVE THE INHERITANCE TO TOKIWA.
I SAID I DIDN'T MIND, BUT SOMEONE ELSE WOULD OBJECT ANYWAY.
TURNS OUT THAT THE TAKATSUKASA ARE..

THE ELDEST SON IS A FALLEN ARISTOCRAT, AND THE SECOND SON IS A COWARD
NO MATTER WHICH ONE INHERITS, NOTHING GOOD WILL COME OUT.
YOU SPEAK OF IT AS IF IT DOESN'T CONCERN YOU.
IT DOESN'T. I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT
THE ONLY RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN ME AND TOKIWA IS THAT WE BOTH DON'T CARE ABOUT THE INHERITANCE.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT TOKIWA AND SAKICHI HAVE BEEN ATTACKED,
BUT IT'S NOT BECAUSE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FAMILY. IT MUST BE A COINCIDENCE.
BUT THAT'S TOO..
WERE ANY OTHER PEOPLE RELATED TO TAKATSUKASA ATTACKED?
NO...
THEN, YOU'RE JUST READING TOO MUCH INTO IT
-

SHE'S GONE NOW, BUT MY GRANNY, WHO CAME FROM THE TAKATSUKASA FAMILY, ALSO CALLED ME NAKAHATA.
MAYBE HATSUKO PAID HER TO DO THAT..
YES, MY MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME.
THIS PLACE IS RENTED FROM THE TAKATSUKASA IN THE NAKAHATA NAME.
BY THE WAY, NAOSHI-SAN,
YOU SAID YOU ARE CALLED NAKAHATA, BUT THAT'S YOUR MOTHER'S NAME..
...
HA-TSUKO-SAMA,
DID SOME HORRIBLE THINGS..
AND YOUR FATHER.. DO YOU REMEMBER HIM?
I DIDN'T SEE HIM OFTEN..
HE WAS NEITHER COLD NOR CARING.
I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HER, SO I DIDN'T EVEN GO TO HER FUNERAL
SHE WAS A PERFECT STRANGER TO ME, RIGHT FROM THE START
I SEE...

HERE?
THEN,
DO YOU MEET WITH YOUR REAL MOTHER, CHIYO-SAMA?
SHE USED TO LIVE IN YOKOHAMA, BUT MOVED HERE THREE YEARS AGO.
THAT'S HOW FATHERS ARE.
YOU JUST SAW HER IN THE CORRIDOR
EH?
SHE'S NOT TOO BOTHERSOME, SO I'VE LET HER STAY.
YES, SHE'S FROM THE FAMILY OF THE MOURI FEUDAL LORDS...
THEN SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY MORE CONTACT WITH THE TAKATSUKASA?
ALL HER CONTACTS WITH MY OLD MAN STOPPED RIGHT AFTER I WAS BORN.
SHE WAS ONLY OCCUPIED WITH HER FAMILY AND CHILD-REARING
YOU'VE DONE YOUR RE-SEARCH WELL.

WE'VE MET SEVERAL TIMES
WELL, YES
YOU REALLY HAVE RESEARCHED US WELL
THEN HAVE YOU MET... THE RELATIVES FROM KYOTO?
BUT, WELL, IT SEEMS THINGS WERE THE SAME WITH TOKIWA'S FAMILY, TOO
I MET TASUKU AND HIS MOTHER IN GINZA AT THE END OF LAST YEAR
DIDN'T TOKIWA TELL YOU?
EH? HERE?
AH, DID YOU?
COME TO THINK OF IT, THEY SHOULD BE IN THIS CITY RIGHT NOW
DO YOU MEET TOKIWA-SAN OFTEN?
MAY I ASK ONE MORE THING?

NOT UNLESS THERE'S A GOOD REASON, LIKE LAST TIME
IS THAT SO..
AH, AND ANOTHER THING
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ANY FLAMING DEMON OR YAMIGOZEN OR WHATEVER, AND I'VE NEVER MET THEM.
WELL NOW,
THE ROADS AT NIGHT ARE NOT SAFE THESE DAYS
THAT'S WHY YOU CAME, RIGHT?
TAKE CARE ON YOUR WAY HOME

MANZOU-KUN.
YES?
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF NAOSHI-SAN?
HE'S VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I IMAGINED.
BUT MARINO-SAN LEFT A STRONGER IMPRESSION ON ME THAN HE DID
THAT'S TRUE.
I SUPPOSE WOMEN CHANGE A LOT WHEN THEY BLOSSOM
WITH THE WAY SHE TALKED ABOUT THE FAMILY SITUATION, TOKIWA-SAN WOULD BE THE MOST SUSPICIOUS ONE
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?
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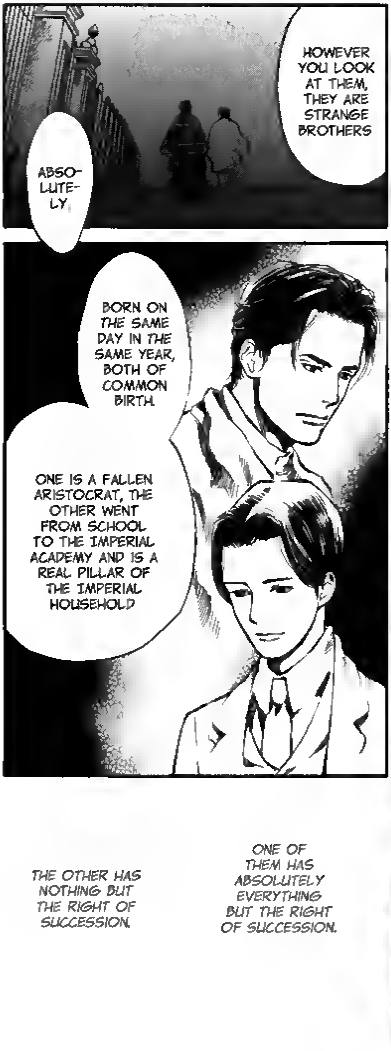
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT MAKES YOU FEEL AS IF THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ALL THIS, AND IT WAS ALL JUST A WHIM OF THE FLAMING DEMON AND YAMIGOZEN.
BUT IF WE DOUBT ANY AND EVERY ONE LIKE THAT, IN THE END WE'RE JUST GOING IN CIRCLES.
I THOUGHT IT MADE SENSE.
ONE OF THEM HAS ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING BUT THE RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.
THE OTHER HAS NOTHING BUT THE RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.
ONE IS A FALLEN ARISTOCRAT, THE OTHER WENT FROM SCHOOL TO THE IMPERIAL ACADEMY AND IS A REAL PILLAR OF THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD
BORN ON THE SAME DAY IN THE SAME YEAR, BOTH OF COMMON BIRTH.
ABSO-LUTE-LY.
HOWEVER YOU LOOK AT THEM, THEY ARE STRANGE BROTHERS

SUCH A SITUATION IS SIMPLY BEGGING FOR TROUBLE..
YES.
BUT EVEN SO, THE MOST UNEXPECTED THING WAS THAT CHIYO-SAN WAS AT NAOSHI-SAN'S PLACE
EH..
?
IS SOMETHING OUT OF PLACE?
NO... IT'S NOTHING PARTICULAR..
I JUSTWONDER IF CHIYO-SAN WAS BEHIND THAT SLIDING DOOR FOR A LONG TIME
WHY?
THERE WAS NO VAPOR OVER THOSE CUPS OF SUPPOSEDLY HOT WATER, THAT'S ALL...
WHEN YOU MENTION IT, SHE SEEMED VERY FLUSTERED..
HAD SHE BEEN EAVESDROP-PING?!

I WONDER...
ANYWAY,
NAOSHI-SAN, TOO, HAS PEOPLE WHO WANT HIM TO INHERIT
MOREOVER, THE THIRD SON IS HERE, IN THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL
YES
IT BOTHERS ME THAT TOKIWA-SAN DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW ABOUT IT
ARE NAOSHI-SAN AND TOKIWA-SAN REALLY THE ONLY ONES WHO WANT THE INHERITANCE
IF THE CHANCE PRESENTS ITSELF?
I HAVE A VERY BAD FEELING ABOUT ALL THIS.